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Devotional Programs
About
People and Places

Ruth C. Ikerman
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DEVOTIONAL PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE
AND PLACES

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Adult Bible Class—"A New Look," "Buying Time," and "Hymn Power."

Christian Herald—"Always Travel with the Weather," "End of the Road," "Heart-shaped Pocket of Missions" and "Year of Restoration."

Improvement Era—"Sweeping That Long Driveway."

Light and Life Evangel—"Washing the Heart's Windows" and "You Can Come to the Program."

Los Angeles Times—"Basketweavers of Nassau," "The Carol That Travels," "Ivory Puzzle of Hong Kong," "Malayan Land of Plenty Time Pretty," "Most Beautiful Piece of Paper" and "Pie for the Fair."

My Baby Magazine—"The Others Box."

New Century Leader—"Dress with Wheels," "The Eloquent Ears," "Fugitive Card," "Japanese Flowers in Daily Use" and "Unseen Mountains."

Quiet Hour—"The Blue Daffodils" and "Letter from Eternity."

DEVOTIONAL PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE AND PLACES

War Cry—"Ceylon's Fragrant Rain" and "Emergency Call."

Woman's Life—"Please Play People."

Young People—"Canadian Rivers of Narrow Way," "Desert Shadows," "Haste," and "Look Up."

PREFACE

This book of devotional programs links experiences of travel and home with the need for material to read aloud in church or club groups. Some of the meditations are seasonal.

Because the experiences include several countries and nationalities, it is my hope that this book will contribute wherever possible to a better understanding of people and places. May it bring some of the beauty of God's world for his children into the rooms of shut-ins and take some of the homeland to missionaries. Always there is the underlying prayer that someone may be reminded to drive carefully on the highway shared by brother motorists.

This book is dedicated to my husband, Lawrence Howser Ikerman. It was Larry who drove our automobile to where the roads run out and stop near the Arctic Circle. He planned our boat trip around the world, sailing westward from the day of beginning to the safe returning home.

DEVOTIONAL PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE AND PLACES

May these adventures in travel remind us to be alert to beauty each day and always aware of opportunities for Christian service and fellowship as we take our individual journeys "westward all the way."

RUTH C. IKERMAN

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**“For the kingdom of heaven
is as a man travelling
into a far country.”**

(*Matt. 25:14.*)

*"They that go down to the sea in ships,
that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord."*

Ps. 107:23

I. THIS SPINNING GLOBE

1. ALWAYS TRAVEL WITH THE WEATHER

SCRIPTURE: Judg. 4:14-16

"Up; for this is the day." (Vs. 14.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Today our devotions deal with a philosophy which is as important to our happiness in our own homes as it is to full enjoyment in travel in far places of the world. The meditation comes from an experience a family had while driving the Alaskan Highway during a summer vacation. There a member of our forty-ninth state advised the family to *always travel with the weather*.

Always Travel with the Weather

One summer my husband and I drove the Alaskan Highway and crisscrossed that vast country on the several roads available to travelers who go by car.

In the middle of a beautiful, sunshiny day we found the road was going to take us by a house with a gasoline pump in front of it. Would this be a good place to stop for a cool drink and a sandwich, perhaps of homemade bread?

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

We knocked on the door and met a woman who had lived for over half a century in her house "by the side of the road." Along with lunch she was to give us one of the best sentences of advice we have ever received.

Inviting us indoors she left us to enjoy her wonderful display of oversize velvety pansies in rich shades of reds, golds, and purples. The flowers were so lovely and the food so good that we wanted to remain for the evening meal. Could she offer us a place to stay overnight?

Our hostess stepped to the open door and pointed to the blue sky and the sunlight glistening on the tall snowcapped peaks beyond.

She said she did not want to seem inhospitable, and she would like to visit with us longer, but she felt we should not spend one minute more inside with her. We should be outside enjoying the view on this brilliant, sunshiny afternoon in Alaska.

She placed her capable hand on my arm and looked at me intently with the keen blue eyes in the weather-beaten face. "Honey, always travel with the weather," she said.

My face must have looked blank for she said that in Alaska she had learned as a girl always to take advantage of such clear beautiful days and travel as far as she could for tomorrow the clouds might hem in the peaks so they could not be seen. Then it would be

ALWAYS TRAVEL WITH THE WEATHER

necessary perhaps to rest until a storm passed before you could go on again in the restored weather.

She "shooed" us out to the car as though we were two more of her pet chickens and waved us good-by. It was a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon of rare and wonderful beauty of which our photographs bring back nostalgic memories.

Next day we drove through blinding rain which completely obscured the fact that there were mountains. She was right. Weather can change quickly. Beautiful days should not be lost, but invested.

Whether at home or in travel, there are bound to be beautiful days waiting to be enjoyed by families and friends. Such lovely hours call for a quick picnic even if the dishes have to wait in the sink. "Tomorrow" the children will be grown and away in their own homes.

Friends who expect to enjoy each other when they can find more time might better have a brief visit now. Today they can admire the pink rose at the edge of the lawn. They may have moved to a new community before the bronze chrysanthemums by the hedge bloom in the fall.

Tonight in the fragrant twilight may be the best opportunity of a year for a father and son to go fishing, or for a mother to go out to the yard and hold the other end of the jump rope for her daughters.

Maybe a husband should get the car out of the garage

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

and take his wife on a brief drive through their favorite valley while the moon wraps the earth in cellophane.

When the rains come, there is sustaining strength in the remembered beauty of the happy moments spent in savoring that which was lovely and beautiful.

Wise in the ways of life was the woman who told me firmly and kindly, "Always travel with the weather."

PRAYER

Our dear heavenly Father, the weather in the personal lives of each of us is so very different, even though we share the same church and same community. Grant to each of us the wisdom to see clearly all that there is of beauty to be enjoyed in today's circumstances. Help us to share this loveliness with those nearest and dearest to us that we may add this much of joy to the beauty of thy world. *Amen.*

2. HEART-SHAPED POCKET OF MISSIONS

SCRIPTURE: Deut. 15:6-11

"Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto." (Vs. 10.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Often our local church group is called upon to support some missionary enterprise many thousands of miles from the home-town church. Today we hear the story of a traveler who was privileged to visit such a mission while on a trip around the world. What she found at Christian orphanages in Hong Kong near the Communist-held border of Red China is described in this story.

Heart-shaped Pocket of Missions

The pocket of the little girl's blue dress was made in the shape of a heart. Proudly she smiled and poked her white chopsticks into that pocket so that I could get a good look at the heart. Then she dipped the chopsticks

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

back into the plastic bowl that held the rice of her evening meal.

She reached up, chopsticks in one hand, bowl in the other, and offered them both to me.

I could not understand what she said to me for she spoke in Chinese. But there beside the rice paddies of Hong Kong, less than two miles from the borders of Red-controlled China, I understood her wistful friendliness and her orphan's-mite generosity.

My tiny, self-appointed hostess rose from the kindergarten chair and walked toward me insistently, the bowl perilously balanced. I tried to smile one quick smile before the tears came to my eyes, and I had to turn abruptly and leave the room. These children, waifs of Communist persecution, had seen enough of tears.

I had read in mission magazines of orphanages supported by various church and community groups which care for such children. On a trip around the world we visited such an orphanage and came face to face with children who were there and alive because of "heart-shaped pockets" in America.

We stopped first at a home for babies where two dedicated British nurses served us four o'clock tea and showed us the clean and happy babies. At the next home we had fresh melon with the children during their Saturday playtime and watched them enjoy the slide which someone had contributed. First they would send their wooden

HEART-SHAPED POCKET OF MISSIONS

slippers clattering down the slide and then follow to pick up the shoes in the sandpile at the bottom.

Because it was Saturday afternoon, the students were not in classes but were taking care of their dormitories where we saw the bunk beds and bedside stands with books and personal effects. Some of the boys were busy in the woodworking shop making tables and chairs. Others were playing basketball on the cleared field near the rice paddy. Some of the older girls were taking their turn walking the built-up ridge separating the rice fields, making sure the water turned into the right furrows. But they seemed to be having fun in this chore and not treating it as burdensome work.

The children tried to take care of one another. During this afternoon "playtime," we saw girls of twelve ironing clothes for those who were younger, using heavy flat-irons heated on wood-burning stoves. We saw an older boy cutting the hair of another with an old pair of scissors.

The girls are trained in homemaking arts and in needlework so that they may become valuable citizens and workers in private homes of the Hong Kong area. Cross-stitch, that handmark of the Orient, is taught the girls, and there were baby pillows and handbags embroidered in the difficult solid embroidery stitch. These tiny smooth stitches were delicately shaded in the colors

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

of sprays of sweet peas, or the wings of the Chinese love-birds.

Some of these characters represented the names of the youngsters. It was a joy to hear them interpreted as "Sweet White Rose" or "Gay Butterfly" and match the names to the little girls sleeping in the baby beds.

How these children do value such possessions as they have. My husband put a new roll of film in his camera and in haste threw the foil and cardboard box to the ground. As soon as we had moved a discreet distance away, the boys and girls at the grammar school moved in closer to pick up these two bits of paper. Later we saw them stored with the simple possessions of two of the boys.

Because we were visitors, the director asked if we would like to speak through an interpreter to the children. We were told to keep the sentences short and try to say what was in our hearts. So we spoke of the power of prayer to bring better conditions into being, and suggested that all of us might pray for more buildings and food and, above all, for world peace. Then it was the turn of the children to entertain us. They said they would like to sing, and they chose their favorite hymn. I was aware that the tune was an old familiar one, but at first could not connect the Chinese phrases. Then I realized it was the first hymn I had learned in Sunday school. Despite the passage of years it still seems to me

HEART-SHAPED POCKET OF MISSIONS

to be the summary of the Christian faith, "God Will Take Care of You."

For the children it was indeed a song of faith as they stood here in the late afternoon sunlight in the land which is closest to the borders of Communist-held Red China. Across the barbed wire only two miles away was a philosophy which not only does not believe that God takes care of human beings but denies the very existence of God.

As I watched the earnest expressions of the faces of the children as they sang, I prayed fervently that enough Christians would be willing to match their faith so that they might be instruments of God.

I hear the echo of the song now that I am at home, and I will not forget the generosity of a tiny girl so proudly waving her heart-shaped pocket. I will pray that through our mission and church circles many will convert their pockets to heart-shaped ones, sharing their substance generously.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, it is hard when we are so far from the scene of actual need to keep firmly in mind the importance of our contributing to missions. From our great abundance it is difficult to imagine the wants of those who have lost family and homes in the great poli-

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

tical uprising of Communism in our generation. Give us the vision to see what we can do to help others who are far away by serving more adequately in our own church missionary circles. *Amen.*

3. MALAYAN LAND OF PLENTY TIME PRETTY

SCRIPTURE: Isa. 61:10-11

"And as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Vs. 11.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Sometimes while working in our home gardens, we long to be able to travel to far corners of the world and see flowers of rare beauty. Today's meditation tells something of the floral abundance of Malaya. It also introduces us to a workman who took pride in showing his land of "plenty time pretty."

Malayan Land of Plenty Time Pretty

When my husband and I started on our freighter trip around the world, there was one thing of which I thought I was certain. No other human being was ever going to be allowed to push or pull or pump any kind of jinrikisha in which I might be lazily seated.

Yet when our boat got beyond Singapore to Penang on the Malaya Peninsula there seemed no other way to get around in the hot tropical Saturday afternoon sunshine. Who wants to stay on board ship when there is a new port to see?

We looked at the assortment of bicycle-like conveyances with carts in front of the pedals. Since our travel money is saved from earning our living by selling paint, we have one infallible rule for choosing foreign transportation or restaurants; when in doubt always take the one with the newest coat of paint.

This led us to a bright, jay-blue bicycle and cart. Its many coats of paint showed the pedaler's interest in his means of earning a living.

Proudly he showed us his license which he kept strapped on his left arm, not hidden in a wallet as our driver's license for the family automobile. The muscles of his arms were almost as well-developed as the huge knots of his brown legs which were swollen and sun-tanned from the constant pumping of the vehicle. Plain-

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

ly this young man wanted the work to support himself and family.

Wishing for buttonhooks and shoehorns to help us both squeeze into the conveyance, we settled back for our first humanity-powered, wheeled ride. Through the busy city streets he maneuvered the craft, expertly dodging busses, automobiles, bicycles, pedestrians, children, cats, and dogs.

Behind me I heard the panting from his throat, mouth, and nostrils. The breathing had a certain rhythm born of the years of such earning a livelihood. It seemed to whistle over my shoulders like a long, sad sigh.

His English was sparse but occasionally he would tap us on the shoulder and motion to the right or left and say "church" or "school." His finger pointed to umbrella-like trees with pink, blue, white, lavender, and gold flowers.

When we reached the Monkey Park, he helped us "unmount" and then threw himself on the cool grass beside a flaming red bush. My husband discovered a stand dispensing a certain bottled soft drink by which America is known across the world.

When he returned, he had three bottles in his hands, one for our "driver." Never shall I forget the almost incredulous look of delight which spread across the face of the young Malayan. For while the drink is available to all, it costs more than a dime in far corners of the

MALAYAN LAND OF PLENTY TIME PRETTY

world, and plainly he did not indulge often. Moreover this was a case of an American bringing him a drink, and apparently he was used to running errands for them.

As we began the return trip, he turned off from the road being taken by the other conveyances. "Plenty time. Pretty," he said as we looked at him in surprise. He went through one of the loveliest residential districts we had ever encountered.

He stopped to show us a hedge of purple orchids, growing in abundance much as a sweet-pea hedge in an American garden. From a special vantage point on a curve he showed us our ship silhouetted in the harbor as he took the leisurely way home by the water's edge.

Never was the simple hospitality of the shared cool drink returned with such speed and courtesy. Because of our experience with the jinrikisha owner who showed us his beloved Malaya, we think of it always as the Land of Plenty Time Pretty.

PRAYER

We are grateful, dear God, that Thou dost honor the work of our hands whenever we try to help our fellow man. Let none of us ever think ourselves better than another because of the type of work done. Grant a special blessing to those who in remote places serve by the

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

sweat of their brows. At home may we ever be alert to opportunities to show others thy great goodness even as we perform our daily tasks. *Amen.*

4. JAPANESE FLOWERS IN DAILY USE

SCRIPTURE: Luke 12:27-30

"Consider the lilies how they grow." (Vs. 27.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Often one of the busiest committees within the church is that devoted to seeing that flowers reach the sick and shut-in, and that they are provided for the decoration of the church on Sunday mornings, or the tables for the missionary luncheon. Today we hear for our meditation how flowers are used in a country many of us would like to visit, the lush green islands of Japan.

Japanese Flowers in Daily Use

Visitors to Japan notice at once the rich use which the Japanese make of flowers in connection with their

JAPANESE FLOWERS IN DAILY USE

everyday living. Not only in the art of flower arrangement, but in lavish abundance in simple ways which add to the beauty of their cities and towns.

The taxicab which meets the airplane or boat has a tiny vase near its ever-present fare meter. In that vase may be a purple iris, a pink carnation, a yellow lily, or maybe all three.

As the car approaches downtown Tokyo, the visitor gets a glimpse into a police box at a busy corner. There on the table with the telephone is a big bouquet of red lilies.

A part of the traffic which the police officer directs from the central stand in the intersection includes three-wheeled motorcycle "carts" by which flowers are delivered in mass.

Then there is the bicycle traffic with bouquets of flowers strapped on the tandem behind the rider. Rolled up in bamboo matting, the stems of the flowers are kept firm and safe, and the colorful blossoms are seen like giant pompoms as the bicycle takes flowers perhaps to some professional office.

Inside the shops where tea and rice cakes are sold there will be a blue bowl with a current flower: maybe purple plum blossoms in early spring, yellow mums in fall.

When the tourist goes to the beauty or barber shop,

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

one of the first things glimpsed is the ever-present bouquet of fresh flowers—wisteria, daisies, narcissus.

This daily use of flowers in connection with the earning of a living makes a combined impact on the visitor so that he comes home from Japan remembering it truly as a land of flowers.

Perhaps he has never had opportunity to learn all the fine points of Japanese flower arrangements. Now he realizes that it will be easy to make a start and put into practice the first rule, for it is just to make sure that the flowers bring beauty and joy to someone. There is pleasure created in using flowers in connection with everyday tasks to beautify the home.

Flowers offer their loveliness as possible gifts to friends who are courageously solving their problems or facing sorrow, and always there is the opportunity of sharing blossoms at meetings of the church fellowship, or adding their blessing of beauty at the Sunday morning altar.

PRAYER

Our father, help us realize that we are one with women throughout all the world when we go out to our gardens and pick the blossoms to bring indoors for our families to enjoy. Thy great abundance of beauty spills across the world with total disregard of nations and man-made boundaries. Grant that we may use generously the

CEYLON'S FRAGRANT RAIN

flowers which thou dost provide to add to the joy of our lives day by day wherever we happen to live. *Amen.*

5. CEYLON'S FRAGRANT RAIN

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 72:6-9

"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass." (Vs. 6.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Today our meditation considers our attitudes when faced with the showers which come into every life and the periods of stress in every organization. An example of inspiration is seen in the experience when a traveler encountered Ceylon's fragrant rain.

Ceylon's Fragrant Rain

When our boat docked in the rich green waters of the harbor at Colombo, Ceylon, we wanted to go ashore and see the growing fields of tea.

Long had our kitchen cupboard at home been filled

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

with spices grown in this gem country which also produces the sparkling blue and white star sapphires.

A short distance from shore we passed young elephants feeding on bananas held out by the boys who walked in front of them. Along the tree-bordered road were women in bright red and purple saris en route home from market.

A light rain began to fall, and almost immediately the warm air became fragrant as a mother's kitchen on baking morning. As the drops of moisture descended on the fields, the bark of the cinnamon trees exuded the wonderful fragrance of hot chocolate and cinnamon toast, as served for refreshments.

But with the abundance of this spice growing in profusion, the exotic aroma seemed to come up from the earth and completely surround all in the area. The harder the rain the greater the wonderful fragrance until it added a new dimension to the beauty of the day.

Standing in the dusty roadway as the sun came out again in the suddenly blue sky, I wondered why the fragrance made me feel vaguely homesick. Then I remembered the spicy scent of carnations in the family garden and how my father tends them faithfully.

I recalled the times when the "pinks" of the old-fashioned gardens have been used to take bouquets to the sick, to those in sorrow. How often has a jaunty red

CEYLON'S FRAGRANT RAIN

or white carnation gone to church in the lapel of an usher.

And I thought of the people who wear such flowers Sunday after Sunday as they go to church, even though they have passed through stress and sorrow. In fact some of these valiant ones seem to give off a spiritual radiance and fragrance in proportion to the rain which falls, even as the fields of Ceylon respond to the showers.

Many storms of disappointment and despair range loose in the world now, so it is encouraging to recall how the fields in the rain gave off a beautiful pungent aroma—something which blessed all the landscape, making a memorable morning of travel.

The Christian has the same opportunity to live a life of sweetness despite the storms of outer experience. Into each life some rain must fall, but the heart trusting in Christ can share some of the beauty of Ceylon's fragrant rain.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to examine our own hearts closely and see exactly what is the spiritual reaction to the storms of life. May we remember that we have a choice when the rains come and that if we live close to thee, our lives may be blessed with a spiritual radiance which will give beauty and meaning to our days. *Amen.*

6. BASKETWEAVERS OF NASSAU

SCRIPTURE: Exod. 35:30-35

"Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, . . . and of the weaver." (Vs. 35.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

One of the joys of travel is encountering people of different complexion who share the same interests as the visitor. Today's meditation tells of the happy meeting of a woman whose face happened to be white, and of the magic hours spent in the company of dark-skinned women weaving beautiful baskets beside the sea.

Basket Weavers of Nassau

On the clean white sands of the beach with the blue of the sea behind them, the basketweavers of Nassau assemble in the early morning sunlight. The dark-skinned women arrive wearing an assortment of wide-brimmed straw hats, examples of their weaving.

Each carefully goes to her accustomed spot, piling beside her the clean-smelling lengths of straw which will be used in making purses, baskets, hats, belts, and table mats for the tourists.

Here I found them on one of the happiest days I have

BASKETWEAVERS OF NASSAU

spent in travel. It is a trip which is comparatively easy to make from the United States, for the Bahamas Islands of the West Indies are located fairly close to Florida.

When the traveler first encounters the basketweavers, he may think that here is merely another souvenir stop, but he discovers it is more as he watches the skillful weaving, for there is the age-old rhythm of the sea in the way their fingers pick up one piece of straw and mold it with another, even as one wave comes in to be engulfed by another.

Seashells, washed ashore on the beach, become integral parts of the weaving. Each woman has in front of her a small, woven dish in which are kept shells of assorted shapes and sizes. Often these are painted a bright pink, blue, yellow, or green. The shades are the exact tones of the tropical flowers growing in abundance, the flowering blue of the jacaranda tree, the many pinks of hibiscus.

Even the sound of the sea is echoed in their talking to each other as they fashion the new straw belts, arranging shells for decoration as blossoms from the sea, for the women speak with a definite British accent, copied from the British colony and combined with the musical cadence of their own tongue.

A special form of British pidgin English has been worked out so that, at first, it is hard to understand their talk.

THIS SPINNING GLOBE

Fascinated the traveler listens while examining a straw bookcover. One of the women smiles and comes closer and says, "They talk of the marriage which took place last night of the daughter of the one who is wearing the blue dress and the son of the one in the white hat."

Could this daughter at one time have been one of the small girls who surround the basketmakers, running off to the sea to pick up fresh, clean shells and bring back for the sewing on with strong, green raffia?

The informant nods her head vigorously "Yes," smiling fondly at the memory and pleased that the traveler has sensed the story of their daily lives together.

Another steps forward and asks if the visitor will look at her table mats. "I have a husband and sick daughter," she volunteers and when this meets with a cynical silence, another weaver sitting nearby says, "It's true, lady, buy from her today."

Whether or not they took turns in such stories, it was not possible for me to tell, but I bought from the woman who told the saddest tale, and her face lighted with a real smile. She put the coins into a black purse with silver snapper such as my own mother carried when I was a small girl.

Final purchase at the market was a huge basket, in which to carry all the smaller baskets, coin purses, bedroom slippers, and belts. Not so much heavy as cumber-

BASKETWEAVERS OF NASSAU

some, we carried the basket by its handles to the waiting boat.

Now whenever we see it holding magazines in the den, it reminds us of the happy morning with the dark-faced women of the cheerful voices, the basketweavers of Nassau.

PRAYER

Dear God, we are grateful for the heritage we share with all the women of the world who work with their fingers making items for their families and friends. May this knowledge show us that we are alike, even though the color of our skins may be different. Even as we enjoy the native women we meet in the excitement of travel, may we always remember to accord courtesy and respect to those of whatever races share with us the daily life of our own home towns. *Amen.*

7. IVORY PUZZLE OF HONG KONG

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 15:1-5

"Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness." (Vss. 1-2.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

A souvenir becomes a symbol in today's meditation. We accompany a family through the streets of Hong Kong and watch the purchase of a beautiful, carved, ivory ball whose possession now reminds the family of the importance of generosity in dealing with others.

Ivory Puzzle of Hong Kong

Planning our freighter trip around the world, my husband and I looked forward eagerly to shopping in Hong Kong for a carved, ivory ball within a ball. Intricately carved from one solid piece of ivory, the trick is to move the nine or ten inner balls around by inserting a little ivory "pick" in the carved holes of the outer ball.

Making all these holes line up evenly can consume hours of time which is probably why sailors on the freighter took such pride in displaying their beautiful ivory puzzles.

IVORY PUZZLE OF HONG KONG

By a stroke of travel's good luck, we were destined to buy our own puzzle within a puzzle direct from the man who carved it in Hong Kong. Walking back to the ship, we glanced inside a dimly lit doorway. We saw an aged man holding a small block of ivory so close to his eyes there was hardly room for his hand to use what looked like a long, steel razor blade.

From the rear of the shop came the thin, middle-aged son, running breathlessly as if he feared we might get away. Behind him were three small, barefoot boys with torn shirts.

We pointed to a heaping box of ivory balls, and the man handed us a puzzle with a pattern of carved dragons complete with tiny, red, leering eyes and long tails which looked as though they could lash the sea. My husband's eyes lighted with the glint of possession, and he said the two American words known throughout the world, "How much?"

At this a girl of about twelve, who must have had some schooling, came out from the curtains to help translate Chinese money into the American and named the family's price for this workmanship.

Without comment my husband opened his wallet and laid down the bill requested. Even though we had been told to be sure to bargain, my husband despises this as a small-town American businessman, and he turned to walk away with his prize, paid for as requested.

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But the Chinese stopped us. He went inside and standing on a rickety wicker bale, rummaged for an oblong box in which to place the souvenir ball and its tall holder. The one he found had a broken glass and he shook his head for "no." His wife joined the search for a lovely oriental container. Shyly she looked at me from over the top of her high-buttoned blouse. Two small girls stared solemnly from behind her narrow skirt.

Now Grandpa beckoned to my husband and pointed to the sharp steel blades on the box where he had obviously spent his lifetime carving for a pittance. He picked up the tools and handed them to my husband to examine. Not one word could be exchanged because of the language barrier, but the smiles of men who understood tools spoke eloquently.

Reluctantly we prepared to leave, and the whole family slipped out into the narrow street to bow to us. Proudly the father clutched the money, and the children sensing his happiness clapped their hands.

At the ship we were greeted by hoots of derision from fellow passengers who called us "suckers" for having paid the first price asked. They had secured larger balls for less money.

But now that I am home and dust the carved, ivory ball I wonder how better we could have spent that sum than in meeting this entire Chinese family and having

CUBAN CLIMBER

for always a memory of their generous expression of thanks for a bargain honestly made and quickly sealed.

PRAYER

God, thou has given us so very much. Help us to be generous in our dealing with other nations and with the individuals with whom we come in daily contact. Help us to remember that there is enough for all when we share that which thou hast given to us. *Amen.*

8. CUBAN CLIMBER

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:1-10

"And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way." (Vs. 4.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

One of the most pressing problems in the modern world is as old as family groups, for the fact of earning a living for one's children is of constant importance. Today we meet a man who lives in Cuba, and who climbs trees in behalf of a better future for his children.

Cuban Climber

On a trip to Havana, Cuba, off the coast of Florida, my husband and I met a man we think of frequently as "The Cuban Climber." He wore faded blue jeans which had been patched with tiny stitches as uniform and delicate as those used on the sheer blouses we had seen in embroidery shops.

In his hand was a long rope, but he was not out to lasso steers. Instead his target was a tall palm tree, the kind you see silhouetted on souvenir postcards.

As we waited, he looped one end of the rope around the large tree and fastened it loosely, though securely and swiftly, with a tidy knot. Then he made two smaller loops out of the other end of the rope and slipped a bare foot into each of the two tiny, rope circlets.

Flashing us a wide grin and shaking his black hair out of his eyes, he began to "walk" up the tall tree by means of the rope supports. With his hands he would make a quick, jerky motion, his arms pulling the lasso of the tree up about half a yard. Then bracing his feet against the tree and leaning backwards in the wind, he would lift his feet another eighteen inches up the tree.

Then it was time for the arms to lift the tree lasso before the feet moved again, all in tempo as if to an invisible orchestra.

As we watched, our necks grew stiff as he climbed steadily to the top of the tree. The illusion was created that he could keep on climbing right out of the top of that tree. He was not only Jack in the bean stalk, but the modern man going into space on an invisible rocket.

When he reached the fronds at the very tiptop of the tree, he stopped to wave at the tourists standing far below. Then he began the rhythmic descent the same way, by means of the rope ladder attached to his body.

As he neared the ground, the guide passed the hat into which tourists flung a few coins. The tree climber looked at my husband and myself wistfully and said, "Many children. I climb trees."

As my husband examined the rope which had held the man's life in balance as well as providing us entertainment, I had a chance to observe his weathered face and workworn hands. It was obvious that here was a worker in the sugar-cane or pineapple fields, someone who wanted to better his standard of living just a little, and who had learned to climb trees.

By putting this talent to work, he had coins to take home to the woman who had mended the faded jeans so beautifully. How we longed to meet her, and learn the names of the children, for the faithful father had reminded us of the loyalty of fathers all over the world, who in daily toil in offices, factory, or farm give of themselves that their families may have food and clothing.

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In our homes we have a daily reminder of the loving care of the heavenly Father who waits to hear the wishes of our hearts expressed through prayer.

PRAYER

Dear Father of us all, be near to us as we work for our own children. In our daily contacts with them keep us mindful that we are all children of thine. As we hold this concept in our hearts, help us to grow in grace, more willing to accept responsibility in behalf of children who need thy special care. *Amen.*

9. MEXICAN WORKBASKET

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 90:14-17

"Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." (Vs. 17.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Sometimes our dreams of travel and accomplishment seem to get lost in the routine days of mending, cooking, and scrubbing. Yet those activities fill the lives of women

in the other countries, longing to visit us and see our way of life. Today's meditation concerns the experience of a woman traveler who brought home a workbasket to remind her of the universal nature of the tasks which all people everywhere share in common.

Mexican Workbasket

Is there any item of household furnishing which becomes a more intimate companion of the housewife than her workbasket?

Inside are buttons for the children's clothing, darning cotton for husband's socks, a rainbow of floss for dainty embroidery. So the workbasket becomes a part of the fabric of homemaking dreams.

On a trip to Mexico I determined to find a new workbasket in the famous basket market at Toluca. Here the Mexican men and women bring the carefully woven baskets which they have made from reeds which grow along nearby river beds, and have dyed with colors from native herbs.

With thousands of baskets from which to choose in the shops, I became bewildered. Weary of the warm day, we returned to our automobile with its red "turista" sign, loaded with many souvenirs, but no workbasket.

Waiting beside the car was a Mexican mother with three small children. In her hand was a workbasket

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woven through with green trees, red pepper berries and white blossoms, complete with gay butterfly. Without a word my husband handed her a Mexican banknote and with a flourish presented me with the basket, exactly right for my sunny, sewing room.

The woman's face lit up with a happy smile which extended to each of the small children. As she fingered the bill, she repeated over and over, *Gracias*, the Mexican word for "Thank You." Her hand met mine for an instant as she reached out to touch the basket for the last time.

Although I was destined to see her perhaps for only five minutes in a lifetime, the memory of that moment blesses the routine mending of each day. Often I send good wishes silently across many miles, wondering what new beauty she is fashioning in baskets made in her home, while I am busy working in my home.

PRAYER

Father of us all, help us remember that we are of one blood and nature. If peace is to come at all, it must begin in our hearts in the knowledge that we are one in thee. May this fact be reflected in the homes we serve and ultimately in our nations that we may live together in peace and harmony, enjoying the blessings thou hast put here for thy children everywhere. *Amen.*

10. CANADIAN RIVERS OF NARROW WAY

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 7:7-14

"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Vs. 14.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

A pleasure of the modern family is traveling together in the automobile to vacation spots of real beauty. Sometimes a spiritual lesson can be derived from a good look at a natural wonder. At such a spot in Canada one family found a new importance in the familiar phrase from the Bible, "The narrow way."

Canadian Rivers of Narrow Way

One of the famous beauty spots in the Canadian Rockies is the place on the Banff to Jasper Highway where the Athabaska River plunges through a deep gorge. Here the highway crosses the river on a high, narrow bridge.

Most visitors drive across the short bridge and come to a stop on a wide shoulder of the road to walk back and peer over the bridge's edge.

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Cars have followed the river along the roadside for many miles during the morning or afternoon of driving through heavy timber with opening vistas away to the glacier peaks. The river has been both wide and shallow and a slate grey in color reflecting the cold waters of the melting glaciers high in the surrounding peaks. But here the rock walls are so narrow that the water must be compressed into a thin swift stream. This water is almost crystal clear.

Its color seems purified as the drops splash in rich white foam against the first rocks of the dropping gorge, made beautiful by the spray which rises above it.

Here the current seems to flow more swiftly after the river leaves the gorge, and travelers have been surprised to see it is strong enough to carry in its wake the adventurous bears who try to swim from one bank to the other.

Going through the straight and narrow gate seems to regenerate this famous river, making it even more powerful. It takes strength to compress all the stream into this one small area. But when the fact is once accomplished, the river seems purified, and visitors marvel at the wonder of it all.

Some of this magic of power and achievement must have been hoped for by Jesus as a transformation of individual human lives when he challenged them to go in through the straight and narrow gate. Perhaps he knew that life has a tendency to meander in a dull, grey color

CANADIAN RIVERS OF NARROW WAY

unless it comes up against a narrow entranceway where all the power can concentrate into new vitality. Then the possibilities for growth and service become endless.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, give us the power to lead vital Christian lives in our communities and churches. Help us to channel our talents and desires into the narrow way that our energies may not be dissipated into many activities which are trivial. Grant us the energy which comes from contact with divine love and the throwing aside of hatreds and resentments. *Amen.*

*"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for
the place whereon thou standest is
holy ground."*

Exod. 3:5

II. IN THE HOMELAND

11. DESIGN FOR AMERICA

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 5:13-16

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Vs. 16.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Many of us like to find time occasionally for needlework for our own pleasure or for the church bazaar. Today's meditation tells of a map of the United States of America which one woman made after traveling. Taking the embroidery stitches, she reflected on some of the religious blessings which are a part of the heritage and design of America.

Design for America

A map of America hangs on the wall beside the table bearing a globe of the world and holding the family Bible. This map was made as a birthday present for the man of the house who had done the driving on many cross-country automobile trips.

In the making I had time to reflect on the privilege of traveling and living in America, as I picked up the red, white, and blue floss for the border.

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Originally the map was traced onto white linen by placing carbon beneath an outline map in an atlas and outlining the states. Fortunately, little lines lead out from the main body of the map, pointing northward and westward, as if to suggest flight routes to our newest states, Alaska and Hawaii.

When the map had been outlined in blue to suggest the ocean over which Columbus sailed, there remained the question of what symbols to use in the interior. Remembering a phrase of advice from my mother, "always begin where you are," I decided to first locate our home on this map. Tracing from a real estate advertisement picture of a house, I soon had our home complete with red roof and chimney.

This called for a garden, and I made some french knots of pink, blue, yellow, indicating the mixed gardens of the pioneer women of America who saved the often scarce water and planted beauty wherever they located. And what is a map of America without a big sunflower?

Somehow the wild sunflower suggests the growing fields of wheat and grain which are symbolized by a simply-made harvest shock embroidered in the rich browns of the good earth. Finishing the embroidering of this portion of the map indicative of God's goodness in furnishing food to eat, I thought of the pilgrims and how they paused to give thanks for such blessings.

This led me to create a simple church, its tall steeple

above the square building for worship, reminding of how early citizens conducted their affairs on the town-meeting basis. Often that church room was the first schoolhouse, and the school day began with the reciting of a Bible verse.

So now the map of America was to contain the outline of an opened Bible, done with simple black stitches against white. Was there a verse short enough to incorporate in the opened Bible? With golden stitches I was able to trace around the three wonderful, one-syllable words, "God is love."

Thus the opened Bible on the embroidered map reminds the family of the central theme of the Christian gospel. Looking at the map so near the globe of the world, our family is determined to pray for peace, that citizens may learn to live in love without hate for one another, or fear of rival nations.

Based thus on reliance on God and the blessed Bible promises of assurance, the map suggests the possible influence through foreign missions of the great Christian design for America.

PRAYER

God of our fathers, we are grateful that the founding fathers of America asked thee for help in setting up our constitution and forming the government by which the

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states are bound into one union. We ask for grace sufficient for these current days that we may live up to our responsibilities as citizens of this great country. Let our influence in the world of nations always be Christian and help fulfill thy plan for the coming of thy kingdom on earth. *Amen.*

12. DESERT SHADOWS

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 57:1-3

"Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge." (Vs. 1.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Children find great delight in playing with shadows. As we grow older, the sight of shadows at sunset can make the heart turn homeward. Today's meditation reminds us that as Christians we find some of the shadows of eternity falling across our daily pathways.

Desert Shadows

One of the joys of motoring across the desert country in New Mexico is the fascination of the shadows which

fall across the road. For the fantastically shaped rocks which jut out of the desert in interesting formations often throw eerie shadows across the highway.

In late afternoon, as the traveler approaches the shadow, he may feel that night is already here as the car swings into the circle of shade on the highway, but as he drives beyond the rock, the hot sun shines again, and the motorist knows there is no need to switch on the headlights.

The traveler notices with interest how the grazing cattle have, almost by instinct, come to the shadow for rest and for shelter from the hot sun.

The benefit of shadows was understood by Jesus and his disciples. They must have been grateful on many occasions for an opportunity to rest in the shade as they traveled over the hot dusty paths in the country which we now call the Holy Land.

In the desert wastelands of the heart when the Christian is beaten by the heat of the conflict, there is rest near the shade of the cross. It, too, casts a shadow, and those who stay near the foot of the cross and who look up trying to find its meaning for their own lives, share the benefits of the shadow across their years.

In the heat of the day in which we live, with its many deserts of misunderstanding and heartache, it is a joy to remember that when the going is the hardest, the shadow of the cross will be on the pathway.

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Refreshed from its comforting shadow each Christian will find it possible to go on again across his own personal desert, for Jesus has promised strength for the task at hand. Rest comes, even through the shadow of a cross.

PRAYER

For the shadows of eternity we are grateful, dear God. May we find new strength for our daily living as we recognize the powerful shadow of the cross. Grant that we may so act within its range of love and compassion that our own lives will cast shadows of blessing on others. *Amen.*

13. LOOK UP

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 17:5-8

"Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." (Vs. 5.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

All of us learn how important it is to watch our footsteps and see where we are going. This is as true in our

daily activities as it is out on the trail during a family camping trip. But becoming too engrossed in looking down at our feet also can be dangerous. Today's meditation reminds that there is a better way to face life and that is by remembering to look up.

Look Up

To reach the interesting cliff dwellings in which the Pueblo Indians of North America lived it is necessary to climb steep ladders. Rangers conduct tourists up these ladders in Mesa Verde National Park in Southwestern Colorado.

As parties carefully begin the steep ascent to the famous balcony house, the ranger goes ahead and stands at the top of the ladder. He watches as you begin the steep ascent, hand over hand.

In the effort to keep the trip a happy one for all, the ranger calls down encouraging words to those on the way up. First advice given the novice is "Never look back." If you should become panicky in the middle of the climb, the hearty voice of the ranger calls down "Look up here."

If you still falter, he calls out in firmer tones, "Keep looking up. Keep looking up." For once this principle is established, the trip can be made in safety. The danger point is when anyone is tempted to turn around and

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look back to see the road he has traveled, if only to admire his own progress!

As you reach the top step of the ladder, the ranger is waiting to give you his hand. In his handclasp at the end of the trail one finds the fears of the climb forgotten.

Anyone who has heard the ranger call down, "Keep looking up," can seldom forget that sound advice. He may compare it with his own spiritual struggles of climbing upward. How right Jesus was when he told his disciples that no one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of heaven. Jesus himself constantly looked upward for strength through prayer and promised companionship and a strong arm to one who desires to climb into the fellowship of the kingdom of service.

PRAYER

Father, we look up to thee for guidance, secure in the blessed promise that thou wilt see that our footsteps slip not. Help us to remember this fact even when discouraged and downcast. We thank thee for all the help available when we turn our hearts to thee and look up.
Amen.

14. SWEEPING THAT LONG DRIVEWAY

SCRIPTURE: Gen. 4:8-11

"Am I my brothers keeper?" (Vs. 9.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Newspaper headlines almost daily remind us of one of the chief problems of our age—traffic safety. Wouldn't it be fine if our church and club groups could have an active part in helping solve the problem of highway accidents by arousing a feeling of moral responsibility for the other cars on the road? Today's meditation tells of the example of a little girl.

Sweeping That Long Driveway

Her favorite possession seems to be a toy broom with which she can sweep like the older people in the block. Sometimes she ties a red ribbon on the handle to match the bow in her own bouncing, brown curls.

Together the little girl and the broom skipped up the sidewalk where my neighbor and I stood talking about the most recent community highway tragedy.

A little boy had been hit by an automobile. Its driver had misjudged the distance to the bicycle when he swerved to miss a piece of broken glass.

Our small friend said, "I heard the noise when the

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white car came to take him away. Say, what do you call that up-and-down noise anyway?"

"Siren," we said, thinking how well she had described what can happen within the home when the ambulance takes away a loved one because of an accident. Hopes of the hearts go up and down with the report of the doctors.

She began to imitate the siren, sweeping steadily with her little broom. My neighbor said, "Something has got to be done about these accidents. They come too close home for comfort."

Suddenly we missed our little friend. Turning we saw her in our own driveway, squatting down on the pavement, looking over a tiny pile of trash she had swept up with her little broom.

We walked over curiously. There was a nail big enough to hurt an automobile tire if hit at the proper angle. A piece of jagged, green glass had probably been carried here by one of the larger dogs of the neighborhood to be buried near his favorite bone in the nearby hedge. There was a scrap of paper which could well blow up to obscure the vision of a windshield.

With her broom she had swept them into one neat pile, and now she wondered what to do next. Stooping to pick up the debris for her, I asked, "Whatever made you decide to sweep my driveway for me this morning?"

Gravely she looked at me and said, "It was because

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of the boy who got hit. You both said something had to be done about accidents, so I thought I'd take care of the first driveway, but it's sure awful long."

She sat down on the grass, holding her tiny broom almost as a doll in her arms, and I went inside for a larger broom to clear off the curb and gutter in front of my own house.

"Say, how long is your driveway?" she called to me from the lawn.

I remembered how we had started from this driveway to enjoy the roads in our own state and across the nation into foreign countries.

Looking at her sweet, unscarred face, I wondered how to tell her that she had just shown me something about how long my driveway is. Now I know it extends from my home into the community, the state, and across the entire homeland of America into neighboring countries.

Because her little broom had shown me that my own driveway must first be made safe and clean, I would try in her behalf and that of the injured boy to learn to treat every highway as my own home driveway.

PRAYER

God, give to each of us a deep concern to keep the driveways and highways of our nation safe for others and

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ourselves. Help us remember that in the car next to us ride men and women who are not really strangers, but brothers of the highway. Let the traffic problem be solved in the hearts of dedicated, unselfish citizens. *Amen.*

15. UNSEEN MOUNTAINS

SCRIPTURE: Col. 2:5-10

"For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." (Vs. 5.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Each new day seems to call for a special portion of faith if we are to live as Christians in our homes and churches. Sometimes our faith is tested in the little irritations of daily life. Many of us will know the frustration described in today's meditation when a family tried to show its nearby natural beauties to a visitor and was hindered by bad weather. Thus the familiar beauty spot became unseen mountains.

Unseen Mountains

When a friend arrived from a distant state to visit on vacation, the first thing the family wanted to do was to show her the nearby mountains for which the area was justly famous.

They had written their friend how beautiful the mountains looked from the living-room window of the California home. On clear days they seemed to ring the valley with their stalwart strength.

"The trees at the rugged top look starkly etched in silhouette against the bright sunshine," they had said. "As the sun moves across the sky, varying patterns of cloud shadows change the appearance of the mountains from green to blue to purple."

On the first morning of the visit a fog obscured the mountains, but the family promised that, of course, tomorrow would be better. By then it was raining, most "unusual" for that season of the year.

Incredibly the whole week of the visit passed without the atmosphere even clearing enough to show the beautiful mountains to the visitor. On the day she left she said, "Are you sure there are mountains out there in the distance?"

But in her teasing of the family there was more than mock jesting. She was disappointed.

Where indeed were the mountains? Well, the moun-

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tains were exactly where they had always been, unmovable, unchanging. It was the surface condition between the home and the mountains which kept them from being visible.

Surface conditions can cloud many experiences with passing disappointments, but they need not do more. For beyond them is the strength to which we can "lift up our eyes."

It is obviously foolish to say that anything not seen is nonexistent, and because any bulwark of faith seems denied at the moment is no reason to say it is not available.

Happy is the man who knows in his heart that the mountains are still there, whether or not they are seen. For an attitude of doubting can permeate the heart until the joys which come through faith are lost in the fog of temporary conditions of confusion or sorrow.

PRAYER

Dear God, forgive us the times when we allow disappointment to cloud our vision of thee and thy great goodness to us. Help us to keep our faith sure and firm regardless of outward appearances. Let this teach us to trust other nations and be aware of their best points, always hoping that we can live together in harmony and climb the mount of peace. *Amen.*

16. HASTE

SCRIPTURE: Prov. 14:26-29

"He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." (Vs. 29.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

We live in an age of speed. Airplanes cross the nation so swiftly that time barriers lag behind. Some of this tempo automatically gets into the reactions of those of us who live in such a quick-moving age. The advantages of haste have corresponding disadvantages which are considered in today's meditation.

Haste

Into a restaurant at one of America's national parks came a family of four intent on luncheon before the time for the afternoon guided tour. The mother drummed nervously with her fingernails on the table while the father read the menu as though it had been a headlined report of the collapse of a whole city.

Snatching the menu from his hand, the mother began to consult with her two young sons concerning their likes and dislikes of the foods listed. With crowded dining-room conditions prevailing, another couple had to share the same table and listen to the family decisions.

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Loudly summoning a waitress they made it clear that they did not wish to be kept waiting a single minute, because there was so much to see outdoors.

"Now don't keep us waiting for our food. If it isn't ready just tell us so now," the mother warned. Whereupon she proceeded to spend time discussing the menu item by item to see which might be cooked most quickly.

Those who had been placed at the same table with the hurried family found themselves weary from watching the exhibition. The feeling of haste became contagious, and it was almost impossible to consume in leisurely fashion the food they had ordered. They deliberately waited to order dessert so that the others would leave, and they could eat in quiet and peace.

It came about that when the "late-comers" paid their luncheon ticket and sauntered down the trail to where the hike was to begin, they found the family of four complaining ahead of them. This time they whined about the ranger's seeming delay of four minutes in starting the trip. It even developed that the mother would stay in the car while the others hiked. For some reason she said she was tired!

The hasty family clearly showed other vacationers that time is meant to be savored and tasted and enjoyed not to be gulped in big bites of haste. In a rushed effort to see all there is to see, many miss the best which God

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has carefully cherished for them. By slowing down they can capture the feeling of spaciousness and beauty, as well as rest, which is inherent in his outdoor world. Then the lush green ferns, the pink and white azaleas, and the flashing wings of bluebirds all speak eloquently of the beauty God has prepared for his children on this earth.

PRAYER

In our haste, God, we often do things we are sorry for later. Just now we would ask thy forgiveness for the word spoken in haste, the times we have rushed past our neighbor when she needed a word of encouragement or kindness. Keep the tempo of our lives tuned to the right degree of speed that we may accomplish the most for the causes of the Cross. *Amen.*

17. EMERGENCY CALL

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 65:1-4

"O thou that hearest prayer,
unto thee shall all flesh come." (Vs. 2.)

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LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Use of the telephone has speeded up action in today's world of travel and business. How comforting it is to be able to call ahead for reservations or to tell the family members that a son is flying home to be with his mother in her serious illness. Today's meditation reminds us that we have a spiritual "telephone" of prayer which can also be used daily and when faced with emergency calls.

Emergency Call

When illness or accident comes without warning into the home, how comforting it is to have the telephone handy to make an emergency call for help.

How we hope nobody else will be using the line, for if it is already in use we will need, in desperation, to demand that they give us clearance.

In such emergencies we feel we must contact someone to give us the help we need to meet the special problem which life has handed to us.

It is reassuring to hear from the other end of the line, the voice of the family doctor, words of counsel of a trusted family friend, or the promise of a loved one that he will be there at once to help.

Even then, the individual faced with a sudden emergency call may find his knees shaking, his voice weak with fear. Fortunately, there is always help available to

the individual. The line to God is forever open through the instrument of prayer.

No matter what the emergency, God is there to listen to the call from the bewildered heart. Many have learned the truth that the psalmist David expressed: "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."

To any emergency call the best answer of all is the one to which this verse refers—the answer which strengthens us with strength in our own souls. Such help enables us to see the problem through to the end, and this power comes from God.

If each day brings its new emergencies and demands for strength, then each day God gives strength for that day. When mental fatigue threatens to break us, inner strength comes by an emergency call through prayer.

Often it must be for those we love that we call for help, in sudden emergency. Holding them in the arms of love, we can always make an emergency call by prayer to the God who hears and strengthens.

But why wait for an emergency? Get on speaking terms with God now. He waits to hear and answer your prayers.

PRAYER

Forgive us, God, because we so often wait to use the great instrument of prayer when we are in some dire

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emergency. Sometimes we do not even know how to dial through to divine help when needed, because we have not kept in practice in the less eventful days of our lives. Yet we know that thou art always waiting to hear our requests and thanksgiving through prayer, and for this blessing we give thee now our heartfelt thanks. *Amen.*

18. A NEW LOOK

SCRIPTURE: Luke 9:57-62

"But the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."
(Vs. 58.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

One of the problems facing this generation is that of refugees from other countries who come to America because of racial problems in distant areas. Today we hear how one woman had unexpected opportunity in her own home to learn how a refugee must feel when obliged to leave possessions and flee on short notice. The

story calls attention also to the lasting treasures which we may all carry with us.

A New Look

"Now I have a little better idea how a refugee feels." A friend whose home was threatened by wildfire in the Southwestern mountains made this remark.

Evacuation was necessary when a sudden shift in the wind sent the flames rushing down a steep canyon toward the previously safe cabin. Men from the sheriff's office ordered: "Be prepared to leave in quarter of an hour."

With these precious minutes she had tried to pack the family silver, necessary clothing, and some food to have in the car. Left behind were family pictures, embroidery work, the easy chair, countless things.

Because the fire was extinguished, she was able to move back the next morning, but the choosing and packing and running from danger remain fresh in her mind and serve a purpose. "*Things* and I should stake no claim on each other," she tells herself as she cleans the closet, keeping only what seems to be necessities. The extras go to those who have less than she does.

The lesson which she learned serves her in good stead as she focuses her eyes on the needs of others. It enables her to somewhat identify her feelings with those

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many real refugees who look to help outside themselves.

More than that my friend knows that the refugees look for help in pointing them to a way of life that is *the* way of life, one that does not depend on treasures that can be destroyed.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”—Matt. 6:19-20

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, we make these verses our prayer, humbly asking thee for wisdom to know which are the true treasures of this life. Help us to use time so wisely that we may be linked with eternity as we work now in our homes and churches. May we always remember that love is everlasting and when we serve in love, we are helping to build the treasures of the Kingdom. *Amen.*

19. BUYING TIME

SCRIPTURE: Col. 4:1-6

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." (Vs. 5.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

The question of whether or not it is possible to "buy time" is considered in our meditation today. For how often do we put off some joy of travel because we feel we do not have time for it, even as we ask to be excused from committee work because of lack of time. In our meditation we will consider time, beginning with the familiar incident of encountering a parking meter.

Buying Time

In many communities it is possible to walk up to a parking meter and put in a penny or a nickel to "buy some time"—time for our car to stay in one place.

But we cannot buy staying time for ourselves. Nor past time either.

No one can buy time to go back and play with a child now grown, nor to make that apology to a friend who has passed on.

Nor can we buy a piece of the present. How difficult

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it is to decide how to secure time to fly across the nation to visit a loved one whom we often neglected when he lived close to our home.

No matter how hard we try, there is no way to buy the companionship for travel, now that the wife has had a heart attack and must stay close to home and doctor.

How can anyone even pick up those minutes of any day on which she meant to crochet a suit or knit a warm sweater for a growing child?

Even the hobbies we meant to take up as soon as we could afford the hours may have to be sidetracked for we can't buy time to enjoy them with friends who have progressed beyond us since wisely they started earlier to enjoy themselves.

Certainly there is no way to buy the lost Sunday morning hours which might have been spent in church, securing much needed refreshment for the heart and spirit, the better to serve in the hours of the week ahead.

The moments lost in self-pity cannot be redeemed and reclaimed when the years are gone in grief and remorse. Because this time cannot be bought, there comes to each life the urgency to use well whatever time there is left in the individual meter of the heart.

Slipping a coin into a parking meter is a good time to resolve silently to use well that great and wonderful free gift of time, a life span granted each of us at birth.

THE BLUE DAFFODILS

PRAYER

God of eternity, we know that time is limitless with thee, and we often feel so frustrated since it is limited with us. We need a special portion of divine guidance from thee to enable us to use wisely that portion of time which thou hast granted us to enjoy with our families and friends. Give us that new insight now that we may serve thee better. *Amen.*

20. THE BLUE DAFFODILS

SCRIPTURE: Rom. 10:6-13

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." (Vs. 12.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

We are so used to pinning labels on things and people these days that we sometimes fail to take a good look at what is closest to us, even the familiar flowers in our garden. Today's meditation discloses how a child saw

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similarities which went across color barriers and which gave the adult gardener pause to consider her own attitude toward races of different colors.

The Blue Daffodils

"When will your blue daffodils bloom?" the little girl from down the street asked me while I watered the garden.

"Why, there are no blue daffodils," I told her. "Is this a pretend flower of your own?"

But she shook her head for no vigorously. "Have you forgotten your pretty blue daffodils? You had them last summer, and you let me pick one."

So I waited with some anticipation the blooming of the season's flowers to see what my young friend considered blue daffodils, for I had quite forgotten how one of the types of blue Canterbury blossoms looks.

One morning this blue Canterbury bell began to ring from the tipmost top of the branch, echoing day by day down the long stem.

While watering the abundant clump outside the den window, I discovered that this so-called bell has a trumpet almost exactly like the center section of my daffodil. Its petals fall back to expose the center beauty in just the same fashion as does the earlier golden flower of spring.

Putting down the hose, I went into the house for the

THE BLUE DAFFODILS

china plate on which a friend had painted in permanent record one of my largest daffodils, long a favorite flower. I compared the design.

Blue or gold, my little friend had recognized the essential sameness of these two flowers which in my adult, assumed superiority I had completely overlooked. Because one came from a bulb and the other from seed, I had automatically believed they could not be alike, but she had not yet learned to apply manmade labels and was able to accept them as similar members of the garden's family. The color did not matter to her, nor the environment of the bush. She recognized the beauty as one.

Humbly I stood before the cluster of such beauty that it belonged on the altar of the cathedral bearing its name. As I picked a flowering taper to take to my small neighbor, it was with a new thought in my heart: The outer color of skin cannot disguise essential likeness to the childlike heart.

This heart recognizes that all belong to the same family of God. And that is the kind of heart Jesus said we all should have.

PRAYER

Dear God, we are glad that we find thee in our own home gardens, but we need to realize that thou art also

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the God of the great world out beyond. May we never be so involved in our own gardens that we cannot appreciate the beauty of the world with its many races. Help us to act as loving children of one Heavenly Father. *Amen.*

*"Yea, happy is that people, whose God
is the Lord."*

Ps. 144:15

III. SOME PEOPLE YOU MEET

21. PLEASE PLAY PEOPLE

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 62:5-8

"Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him." (Vs. 8.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Sometimes children give us new insights into the way we are living our lives as adults. Today's meditation is based on the plea of two little girls.

Please Play People

When I asked my two small nieces what I could do to help them play their game, they begged me, "Please play people."

It developed that this meant that they wanted an audience to listen to them sing their school songs, watch them act out a little play with their dolls.

All I had to do as my share of the game was to sit quietly and watch them, all the while listening to what they were singing and saying.

So I seated myself comfortably in the chair and relaxed and thoroughly enjoyed the moment. It was fun, I discovered, to "play people."

The happy moment reminded me of how often I too

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have longed for someone to "play people" to one of my own ideas, or just to listen to a problem.

This event showed me clearly that there is something I can do to help some friend or relative. I can sit down in a nearby chair and be an interested audience to their fears and hopes.

In this process of "playing people" it is just possible that I may develop from the indefinite "people" to a specific "person"—one with the understanding heart who does not have to pretend.

This technique works not only at home, but in club and church contacts. Often leaders need followers who will listen to the aims of the organization and the plans worked out in board sessions.

It is equally true that sometimes leaders need to become the interested audience, hearing what the followers feel is necessary to the success of the program as a whole.

Once learned and practiced in home situations the process of "playing people" can be applied to community projects dealing with minority groups, or the aged, or juvenile playgrounds. What is needed first is people who will be interested in the needs of others.

Applied on an international basis, this same interest would speed the cause of missions, might make its real contribution to the coming of peace. For true understanding between nations begins when citizens are willing to watch for the good points in other nationalities.

THE ELOQUENT EARS

Peaceful happiness in any area is achieved when understanding hearts follow the advice of the little girls to "please play people."

PRAYER

Dear God, we think we are such busy people that we do not have time to sit idly by and listen to the dreams of other hearts or even to praise them for their successes. Help us to remember that each of us has the same number of hours in each day, and to look to thee for guidance in using this precious gift of time. May the years mold us into people of vision with understanding hearts. *Amen.*

22. THE ELOQUENT EARS

SCRIPTURE: I Cor. 2:9-13

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (Vs. 9.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

People met in travel stand out for years in memory as significant, sometimes changing the direction of life.

SOME PEOPLE YOU MEET

Today we are introduced to a new friend, a man met when motorists stopped to attend worship service on Sunday morning at a wayside church.

The Eloquent Ears

He was standing by the open door of the church talking to the children as they came out from their morning lessons, Sunday-school books in hand. The first thing I noticed about him was his wide smile and the way the curly, white hair bounced over his right eye as he bent down closer to the children.

One of them stood on tiptoe to show him the picture she had colored during the morning activity period, and I saw him say something to her which caused her to echo his smile before she skipped happily down the walk.

As my husband and I settled back in the pew, I idly watched him before the organist began to play. For each child the unknown friend at the door had a special word of greeting. His keen eyes would note a bright red purse or a Boy Scout badge, and to the owner he would volunteer a greeting as he always spoke first. The children usually answered with a smile and shake of the head, "yes" or "no."

When the children had all left their classes, he turned his back on the deserted room and faced those who were

arriving for church. Immediately upon glimpsing him, a new expression of pleasure would come across their faces.

In particular I noticed the woman with black veil and hunched shoulder who straightened her head and relaxed her tense face after pausing to speak to him. A young couple talking grimly were stopped by his outstretched arm, and he held them both there for a moment before they came on into church. In the pew behind me I heard the girl give an obvious sigh of relief as though the older man had settled something for them with only a sentence or two, perhaps their first quarrel.

When the first hymn began, he came inside to take his place in the opposite pew from us, getting up once to open the door wider for the weather had grown warm and oppressive, and it promised to be a sultry Sunday for all except the motorist en route elsewhere.

Immediately after the benediction, we started for the nearest open doorway, and I saw that our white-haired friend had already stationed himself there to say a word of farewell to those who should leave by this exit. How much of the community news he must gather in this way, I thought, as I watched him shaking hands with those who were in front of us.

In a moment now I would tell him where we were from and that we were glad we had found a wayside church in which to worship this warm Sunday morning. Probably he would want to know if we knew somebody

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in a certain town, for almost every family has some cousin who has moved west.

But I was destined to be greeted as I have never been greeted before. As we reached him, I saw that his keen eyes were blue, and they appraised us as much as to say, "How did you get in here without my seeing you earlier?"

He held out a hand to each of us and said, "It will do you no good to introduce yourselves for I am completely deaf, and I cannot hear one word you may say to me, but you are travelers, aren't you?"

I nodded my head, briskly up and down in "yes." Then he said, "Isn't it a joy to travel over modern roads these days?" to which my husband nodded assent.

"Wherever you live, may God give you a safe journey home," he said and turned with a smile to the next in line.

Now I knew why I had seen such energetic bobbing of heads when the children spoke to him after church school. Behind me I heard two women discussing whether to bring beans or potato salad to the church potluck night. I heard the man in the brown suit call to the one in blue that they wanted a deacons' meeting up front.

All this chatter about the immediate present and its routine came into my ears, and by the doorway stood a man whose ears were silent. Yet clearly he had heard when he had seen the troubled woman in black, the im-

DRESS WITH WHEELS

patient young married couple. Indeed he had listened to our thoughts about our journey.

Often my husband and I had heard sermons about those who having ears hear not. Now we had met a Christian whose silent ears truly listened to the hearts of those in need.

PRAYER

So many sounds assail us, Father, that we sometimes do not hear correctly. We take the surface sounds for the real melody, not getting quiet enough to hear the underlying theme of love and sacrifice. We ask thee now to keep our own ears attuned to the needs of others at the same time we hear thy voice granting us grace sufficient to our need. *Amen.*

23. DRESS WITH WHEELS

SCRIPTURE: Rom. 8:35-38

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Vs. 37.)

SOME PEOPLE YOU MEET

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

With the modern emphasis on rehabilitation of personality following physical accident or mental illness, our churches and clubs face up to new responsibilities of service. Sometimes the members find new inspiration for their tasks in seeing how well their associates rally to some circumstance which might handicap less courageous people. Today's meditation introduces us to a brave woman who wore a dress with wheels.

Dress with Wheels

How to persuade Mother Brown to come back to church after her automobile accident was the question. Her family pleaded, her friends begged, and her pastor prayed. But she stood firm.

To be more precise, she did not "stand firm" at all. She merely sat in her wheel chair by the window and watched others on the way to morning worship service.

"Go ahead. I'll be all right while you are away," she would say with the cheerfulness which had marked her recovery almost from the first dark morning when even the doctors had despaired.

So far as anyone could see, her sorrow over the loss of her son who had been behind the wheel had also been dispersed somewhat by her love of life and her unselfish wish not to burden others with her grief.

But to go to church, this she would not do. The members of her son's businessmen's class offered to call for her and place her in the beautiful new station wagon owned by the manager of the bank. "Nonsense," she said, "I'm better off at home with my television service than pestering you with transportation problems."

Even a special invitation from the choir to come and hear their cantata failed to arouse any enthusiasm. "I give up," said the director, "if music won't get her out of that house, then nothing ever will."

Hadn't Mother Brown served as chairman of the music committee for years and years? How lovely she had always looked in her flowered print, chiffon dresses as she made a little presentation speech to the choir president or presided at the coffee urn at the reception following the program.

Didn't all the little girls secretly hope to grow up to look exactly like Mother Brown with her flower-decked hats and soft rainbow-ribbon scarf? And now she sat at home, day after day, ever since she came out of the hospital room where she had lingered so long in the painful cast. She did not want to be seen in a wheel chair. Only her nurse knew how much she disliked even the color of the chair.

She might be sitting at home still, taking no active part in the church she loved if help had not come from the most unexpected source of all.

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After the preacher, banker, family, friends, busybodies, doctors, nurses, had all failed, the painter succeeded. He was called to the Brown residence by the caretaker early in springtime to redecorate the living room.

Mother Brown superintended the work from her chair by the window, not wanting to be moved even when the painter came over to her corner. "That is such a pretty shade of pink," she told him, "I just like to sit here and watch you splash it on. I even like the smell of it. Reminds me of when Son was little, and we made a nursery out of the spare bedroom where we lived then."

The painter stood there a moment looking at her white hair, the blue eyes, the sweet face, keeping his eyes from the scar made by the shattering windshield glass. Then he deliberately walked over to the chair in which she sat and said, "Let me give you some to look at, wherever you are in the house."

And before anybody could stop him he had daubed some pink paint on the shiny chrome of her newfangled, lightweight wheel chair.

Nobody had done anything without her express permission for so long that she was startled into either an outraged sigh or a chuckle, and she decided to laugh.

"About time I had a new color," she told him firmly. "I always detested silver anyhow. It's bad enough to be in this chair all day without having to look at this dull color. But pink looks real cheerful."

DRESS WITH WHEELS

So the painter made the chair a bright pink. "Let me know when you want the chair's color changed," he told her.

Proudly she drew herself up to her best sitting position and said, "Sir, I'll have you know this is no longer a chair. This is a dress with wheels."

Next Sunday she was in church. The banker lifted the wheel chair out of his station wagon and carried her to the steps. The boys of the usually unruly Junior class held the plank runway still as she wheeled into the back of the church.

The board voted next month to rip out the back row of seats so there would be a better place for the dress with wheels. Last Sunday when I stopped by to invite her to the woman's missionary society tea, she told me, "You won't know me. I'm having a new dress painted Monday night. There is a new shade of green which will look cooler for summer."

Mother Brown had learned the therapeutic value of the beautiful colors God provides in the world of natural wonders.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, help each one of us to drive carefully so that we may not become a part of an accident which will harm someone else. Give us tact and

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wisdom to deal with those who have been hurt from whatever cause as they travel life's highway. Make our churches places of balm and comfort where the wounds of life may be completely healed. *Amen.*

24. FUGITIVE CARD

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 25:31-40

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Vs. 40.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

An important committee in any organization is that which takes care of sending cards to the sick and shut-in. Often a part of this group's task is to encourage the entire membership to act on this committee so that the organization is known for its friendly concern. Today's meditation describes the experience of the fugitive card.

Fugitive Card

"Will each of you please be sure to remember to send a card to Mrs. Brady?" the president of the church circle asked.

Mentally I made a note to be sure to post a message that very afternoon. Left in the top drawer of the desk was a card with a hand-painted picture of a tropical bird, complete with actual feathered plumage, purchased on a trip to Mexico City. Hastily I addressed and posted it.

In another Sunday or two Mrs. Brady was back in church, and there was noticeable coolness in her tone as she greeted me. Finally she turned to me and said plaintively, "I did so hope you would somehow find time to send me a card when I was so painfully ill."

So I said that I had indeed mailed her a bird card, the one I had been saving for myself as a bookmark, with its gay plumage of blue, red, and green. She seemed so disappointed that it had not arrived that I promised to try to find another one for her.

Then one day I learned that Mrs. Brady had gone to the hospital again for more treatment, and when I volunteered to call on her, the committee chairman just laughed at me. She said that Mrs. Brady had gone into the nearest big city, as always, for treatment from her specialist friend.

So now my face was really red. Probably I had mailed

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my former card to the wrong hospital. Perhaps a busy clerk had quite properly consigned it to the wastebasket since I almost surely had included no return address in my haste.

I supposed that was the last I was to hear of the card, but it happened that at a community luncheon at which a civic problem was to be discussed I was seated next to a clergyman known widely in our valley for his visiting those in need, of whatever faith. As soon as luncheon preliminaries were disposed of, he turned to me and said, "I've been thinking I'd call on you for some information."

He reached for his black book and pencil and said, "Where can I buy those gay, plumaged-bird cards?"

So I started to tell him that the best way was to go traveling although I did know the address of an importer, but I stopped myself in the middle of the sentence to ask him a question. "How do you happen to know that I send bird cards?"

"Oh, that's easy," he said. "I've seen so often that brilliant bird you sent into that dreary hospital ward. In fact I'm the man who framed it for the woman."

"Tell me more," I said, as we pursued our luncheon. "What and where did all this happen?"

"If you have forgotten sending it, the woman who received it hasn't forgotten getting it," he told me. "The women in her section of the tubercular ward call it their

lucky bird, but I've been curious as to how you found out about this patient. She had just arrived and her husband Bob Brady is a war veteran still away in the service. It gave her a real lift when the nurse came in with a card addressed to Mrs. Brady."

Yes, of course, when my Mrs. B. J. O. Brady had not been a patient, the clerk at the desk could have thought this was meant for their Mrs. Bob Brady, particularly if my handwriting had looked as it often does. Certainly she would suppose that it belonged to the only Mrs. Brady they had as a patient, and that person had turned out to be a slim girl in a tubercular ward.

"She used to belong to your denomination back home, but she didn't know anybody here knew or cared about her. Maybe they don't," this pastor added wryly. "At least nobody else has ever sent her a card or called on her in all this time."

I put down my fork and said, "Honest confession is good for the soul, they tell me, and I didn't know about her either."

"You made quite a gift when you sent the card," said my preacher friend. "You ought to try it again sometime," he added with the bluntness which makes him valuable on civic boards.

"What you mean is that I ought to try it at least once," I told him. "That card got there strictly on its own, a fugitive from the stack of many cards Mrs. B. J. O.

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Brady received. I think I'll have to go take another look at the bird and see it caged in its frame on the wall of a ward. I want to get acquainted with your Mrs. Bob Brady and make a new friend."

PRAYER

Dear God, grant us a sense of compassion for those who are lonely for whatever the reason. Give us hearts that share of our bounty with those who need the encouraging message either written or spoken. Let our understanding and outreach contribute to the happy accidents of richer living. *Amen.*

25. HYMN POWER

SCRIPTURE: Eph. 5:15-21

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Vs. 19.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Most of us have had the experience of passing through a busy railroad station while on some happy vacation

travel; or perhaps called "back home" on a sad emergency. The railroad station of a small town or large city is often the scene of much emotion. Today's meditation comes from the experience a traveler met when she heard a little girl singing a hymn, long-beloved in our Sunday schools.

Hymn Power

Having breakfast one morning in the restaurant of the Union Railroad Station at Los Angeles, California, I became aware that the waitresses were standing still and wearing beaming smiles as they looked at the group sitting next to me at the counter.

So I turned to discover a white-haired Grandpa apparently just arrived from the East to visit his daughter and her family. Granddaughter had decided to give Grandpa his present now while her breakfast waited.

Accordingly she was singing at the top of her five-year-old voice, "Jesus loves me! This I know." Her mother explained that the little girl had memorized the words as a surprise for Grandpa on arrival.

When the waitress brought me a fresh glass of water a few minutes later, she was quietly humming this hymn, and I found myself singing it late in the evening as I traveled home after a busy day of shopping and appointments.

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A little girl had started the day by singing a hymn for her grandfather, and its echo had been heard in other hearts all day. It reminded me to try to start my day at home with a hymn in my heart, thinking this might spread to other members of the family as each picks up his own problems for the day.

Sometimes in the simple songs that children learn there is a lesson which will bless the lives of adults. In a statement of faith and knowledge such as is contained in a number of the hymns, there is definite power for the facing of everyday tasks. For the little girl's hymn is a reminder of the reassuring fact that "Jesus loves *me*." And this is a powerful piece of knowledge which can launch the individual on paths of service calling for courage and devotion to ideals.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, many of us have traveled a long way in life's journey since we first heard the simple song which says so clearly that Jesus loves each of us. Sometimes the experiences of life have tended to keep us from realizing this fact as strongly as we should always have done. From this moment forward, give each of us the realization that we are children of God held firmly as individuals in his all encompassing love and compassion. *Amen.*

26. LETTER FROM ETERNITY

SCRIPTURE: John 3:16-18

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Vs. 16.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Good neighbors are among the choicest gifts we have in life. This is true of countries as well as individuals. Today's meditation tells of the loss sustained when an elderly neighbor who had lived out his span of earthly years answered his letter from eternity.

Letter from Eternity

He lived just a little too far away for me to call to him when we went out for the mail each morning. Our voices would not carry that far on the fragrant breeze, but we always waved across the distance in the morning sunlight. Sometimes I would see him lift his eyes to the blue sky and turn toward me as if to say, "What a wonderful day is this." Then he would open the mailbox to peer inside and see what the carrier had brought. By now I would be looking inside my box and bring out what had been left for me.

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Together, yet apart, we would cross the peaceful little street to our respective houses. Stepping inside, we would read the mail which belonged to each of us, and act accordingly.

We had not spoken in words, but yet we had communicated with each other in the simple task of going for the morning mail.

Now my neighbor is dead, gone from earthly vision. No more will I wave to him as he goes to pick up the transient mail from the box. But even as I never needed to hear his voice to know he received my morning greeting, so I do not need to be able to see him now to feel that we have fellowship, for he and I long since picked up letters from the same heavenly mailbox. We both read and accepted the great words of eternal truth.

He receives his letters now on the other side of earth's boundaries, and I still find mine here. But because of our faith we both read and share the words of eternity.

I shall miss the joy of waving to him across the little street on which earthly duties consume attention, but I shall try to keep my eyes truly alert to the summons of the spirit from the land to which he has preceded me.

For with humility I realize that his letter of inevitable command has arrived just a little ahead of the one destined for my own heart and life. Each of us has a personal *letter from eternity*.

LETTER FROM ETERNITY

The important thing is that we each have prepared our hearts through acceptance of the great gift of life everlasting. This is available to all who turn to God in repentance and belief.

PRAYER

Eternal God, we look around and see that some of our number have already answered their personal letters to eternity and are no longer with us to serve the home-town church and their well-loved communities. As a memorial to them, help us to serve better whatever our task for the Kingdom may be as we use our earthly talents for the things which matter eternally. *Amen.*

27. WASHING THE HEART'S WINDOWS

SCRIPTURE: Ps. 51:1-10

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Vs. 10.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

America has been blessed by the contributions of citizens from many different countries. Some of these new citizens have made large gifts when material fortunes have accumulated, and others have remained in obscure positions but offered valuable service in their daily labor. Such a woman is the one described today.

Washing the Heart's Windows

"You must learn how to keep the windows of your heart washed and polished clean." The immigrant woman who earned her living in her new homeland of America told me this when I was small.

She was a familiar sight with her scrub brush and cleaning cloths carefully tucked into a frayed canvas bag which she carried over one arm. When a cloth handle wore out, she substituted another, so the handle usually was a different shade than the bottom of the bag.

From it she would remove the various cloths she used

WASHING THE HEART'S WINDOWS

in cleaning windows. Fascinated we would watch her make large sweeping motions with her arms as she seemed to scrub the windows in one huge circle converging on another.

Sometimes she would ask us to look for smudges from within while she scrubbed the outside. At other times we would be asked to wait on the outside of the window looking in while she rubbed the inside smudges away.

This way we learned that a window has two sides and both must be clean: the one through which the heart looks out on the world, and the one by which the world looks into the heart.

Probably it was during one of these scrubbing sessions that she uttered the advice we have always remembered, to keep the windows of the heart washed and polished clean.

It looked easy as she did it, but we have learned that it is hard to make one circle follow another, in an all inclusive sweep which includes everyone with whom the heart comes in contact.

For the experiences of life do leave their smudges. Only the scrubbing hard with the arms of love can ever remove the damaging marks which come from the strokes of sin and despair. This keeping clean is a constant process, each day bringing its own debris of dust from which the heart must be cleansed.

The psalmist knew about this housekeeping problem

SOME PEOPLE YOU MEET

of the heart for he raises the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" The answer comes in the same sentence, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Ps. 119:9.)

This cleansing is available to all, regardless of age or circumstance, who will daily turn to the Bible for truth and act according to God's word.

PRAYER

Our loving heavenly father, we know that thou dost place emphasis on the inside being as clean as the outside, and that our first duty as Christians is to lead clean lives as set forth in the example of thy son. We are glad that in our homes we have opportunity to try to keep our lives scrubbed free of sin, even as we keep our homes clean and attractive places for our loved ones to enjoy. Come into our hearts and homes with thy cleansing love. *Amen.*

28. PLEASE MAKE ME A DOLL

SCRIPTURE: Luke 11:11-13

"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Vs. 3.)

READER'S INTRODUCTION

Today we are introduced to a mother who lived during the time of the Roman Empire. The doll she fashioned for her little daughter still survives. In this story perhaps some of us may find inspiration to dress dolls or mission boxes or orphanages.

Please Make Me a Doll

In a locked case in the British Museum in London, England, one happy morning of travel, I encountered a tattered rag doll. The sign said that this little doll dated back to the period of the Roman Empire.

Less than one foot in length it was fashioned of brown cloth resembling today's burlap. Large stitches of coarse, brown thread looked as though the cord might have been veiled from the edge of the cloth. And this material looked as if it had been a part of the simple garment of peasant mother. Apparently she had folded the rough cloth and torn it to make the doll's arms, head, and legs.

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Looking at this simple doll, my husband and I asked one another: Who do you suppose made this doll? No body knows her name of course, but it seems likely that she was a busy Roman mother.

Who played with this doll? That, too, is a mystery, but any modern mother looking at the case can come close to guessing who made the doll and who played with it. For what small daughter on a rainy day has not at some time said, "Mother, please make me a doll."

Pioneer mothers fashioned the dolls from flowers found along the stream beds, notably the pink hollyhock "ladies." Today's mother may use a nylon hose, cleverly twisted and stuffed with other stockings, but she has much in common with the mother in the Roman Empire, also worried about weapons.

Did the Roman mother feel baffled by the plans of the Caesars, the reports of Nero's fiddling? Bereft by high taxes of money to buy popular toys, she concocted a doll to amuse her child, and the toy survives to this age of the H-bomb and intercontinental missile.

With outstretched arms the rag doll of Rome waits not only for the little girl long since gone. Silently she invites the modern mother to fashion a new rag doll to bless the hours of today's youngsters growing up amid the confusion of the cold war.

If the children in the home are gone, there are those many children in orphanages in America and other coun-

PLEASE MAKE ME A DOLL

tries who would find solace in such a doll. For who can know the power of a doll to help a child build a feeling of security, a sense of love in the world of modern weapons.

I turned away from the Roman weapons, the armor and the spear in the British museum with new hope in my heart because I had seen a rag doll fashioned from the brown garments of a peasant mother whose act of love survives.

PRAYER

Dear God, we are so grateful for the mother hearts and loving hands which fashioned dolls for us when we were small to bless our lives with a sense of security. May we in turn be inspired to provide such beautiful memories for children who need us now. Let the happy faces of children in our family circle be reflected in our acts of Christian service. *Amen.*

29. YOU CAN COME TO THE PROGRAM

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 18:2-5

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Vs. 4.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

We are to be reminded today of one of the time-tested ways of having an active club or church group in any part of the world. That success comes when enthusiastic members remember to invite others to attend.

You Can Come to the Program

From my chair by the open doorway I saw the boy with the blue plaid shirt as he came up the driveway. He stopped to slick down his unruly hair with a handful of water from the hose on the lawn.

Drops of water trickled down his perspiring face. With one hand he wiped away the excess moisture while he poked my doorbell with the other. Carefully rehearsed was his speech:

"Could you come to our church afternoon story hour?" He asked me the question almost before I got to the

YOU CAN COME TO THE PROGRAM

door. Then he saw that I was an adult when obviously he had expected to find someone nearer his age.

When he learned that there were no children in the house, he shifted his weight from one bare foot to the other and stared at me trying to think what to say next.

Perhaps I could help him out of his confusion, so I said, "There are lots of children further down the block. Maybe they would like to accept your invitation."

"Thanks, lady," he said. "It's a new church meeting over here on the next corner, and this is the first time us kids around here ever had a story hour."

Obviously he was still unhappy that I couldn't attend along with him. He turned to leave the porch, the big toe of his bare foot curling under as if it too was engrossed in thought.

"Tell you what, lady," he said to me in a burst of enthusiasm, "you can come to the program we give."

He flashed me a reassuring grin as he ran down the porch and over to the house next door, and I watched him with warm gratitude in my heart.

For he had given me the most heartwarming invitation I had received to any church function in years. Why? Because this caller at the door had been determined to make me feel that there was truly a place for me, and that he sincerely wanted me there.

That place might not be what he had at first intended, but surely it was waiting if we would search for it. This

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little boy with the freckles and scrubbed face had invited me to far more than his program. He had reminded me of my own need to invite others to attend the church of their choice, for there is a place waiting for all who will accept.

PRAYER

Dear God, we are grateful that at sometime someone asked us to attend Sunday school or church. Help us to be mindful of our own responsibility to welcome others into this circle of Christian fellowship. Let us remember that the church of the world is no stronger than the church on our corner. Be with us to guide and direct whether we serve at home or in far places. *Amen.*

30. THE OTHERS BOX

SCRIPTURE: Matt. 7:7-12

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." (Vs. 12.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

In our meditation today we meet an American family composed of the young father and mother and their two small children. With the ever-present need to make the family income cover many different purchases, this family has discovered a way to co-operate and help people in need.

The Others Box

In the hall closet of a certain home where I love to visit there is a big cardboard box. A sign made from white construction paper and lettered with red crayola has one word. That word is *others*.

The children made the sign. This you can tell by the wiggly border of curlicues and embellishments decorated with red hearts, blue flowers, and a yellow butterfly. Plainly they wanted this to be a beautiful sign.

The box once held groceries which their mother and father brought home from the market. Now it holds an assortment of clothing, shoes, toys, books, and vases. As soon as the box is filled to the brim, it is immediately emptied.

How? By an excursion which this family makes to the town's welfare agency. Sometimes it is mother who takes the son and daughter with her on a shopping expedition when they take the box to the agency before buying their

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own food and clothing. It may be that on Saturday between the lawn-mowing chores around the house it is the young father who drives the children to the settlement headquarters. This family makes a happy-hearted excursion out of its delivery of material to those who can use it after it has been used in their home.

By this simple technique the children find it fun to take their toys to others who will use them after their original owners have tired of them. There is none of the whining and crying about giving up something, even if it is no longer being used.

Every time the children put something in the box they see that giant word "Others." Little by little they become aware that the world holds many other people besides themselves.

By the simple use of an empty box to be filled and then emptied again, both by the process of love and sharing, this family is keeping its own possessions in order and learning important lessons in citizenship.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, help us realize that we cannot become aware of the great many others of all races in the wide world until we have first realized that there are others close to us. These include the members of our own families with whom we need to share kindness and

THE OTHERS BOX

courtesy. Just out and beyond the security of our own families there are many who can use whatever we are willing to share. Be with us as we venture to take this first step out into the world which encompasses all races.
Amen.

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years."

Gen. 1:14

IV. SEASONAL PIECES WITH TRAVEL BACKGROUND

31. LILAC HEDGES OF LOVELINESS

(A Memorial Service)

SCRIPTURE: John 17:1-3

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (Vs. 3.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Today our group pauses to pay tribute to the members who have passed away during the year. Our memorial tribute now considers their contributions.

Lilac Hedges of Loveliness

Each year what a lovely experience it is when the purple and white lilacs come into full bloom. Travelers driving across country in springtime are almost never out of sight of the blooming lilac bushes in some home garden.

Musing as to why there should be such a chain of lilacs in whatever state, I have come to the inescapable conclusion that: The lilacs are in home gardens because one neighbor has handed the roots to another.

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As the pioneers pushed westward, the women planted the cuttings of lilacs, and so the beauty spread further. From such a simple act as this has come the national beauty of the lilacs forming an almost impenetrable hedge of loveliness. This links one city to another, one state to the next.

The memory of the fragrance of the lilac hedges seems folded in with the road maps of travelers. And the fragrance of memory is with this group which has its own lilac hedge of loveliness—the blossoms of service by which this organization is known in this church and community.

How did these blossoms come to bloom in such profusion? It was because of the dedicated service of members of this group. Each of us has a different talent, a special contribution to make. But the important thing is that with our hands outstretched we give that which is ours to give—to another—in behalf of Christ. Only in this fashion are the hedges planted, whether of lilacs or of love and service.

Today this group pays tribute to members who in the past year have stepped over the earthly hedges and moved on into the beauties of eternity. Each is remembered for what she did to help us nurture the blossoms of service. Each of you will have your own special memory as their names are read: *(Insert here names of the members who have passed on during the year.)*

LILAC HEDGES OF LOVELINESS

Their memories will be with us when the lilacs bloom in all the springtimes ahead, and in the heat of the summer as well, or the brisk days of fall when new activities begin. For these were people who passed along to their neighbors the roots of service, the spiritual plantings which led to the blossoms of achievement in this group they loved so well.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, let our lives express the loveliness of life eternal. Here and now may we live with love the motivating power of our daily service. Help us to let go of the things which hinder our full development as Christians. Since life is so short among the earthly lilacs, may each day be filled with the happiness of service, that we may become more accustomed to the beauties of the waiting eternity. *Amen.*

32. YEAR OF RESTORATION

(*New Year*)

SCRIPTURE: Joel 2:25-27

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten." (Vs. 25.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

As the New Year comes, each of us wonders what it will bring in the way of happiness and sorrow, routine and adventure. Sometimes we feel ready for a new start, fresh opportunities to take away from the feeling of frustration we have over difficult circumstances. Today's meditation is built upon a happy promise, the blessed assurance of restoration following the "Locust-eaten years."

Year of Restoration

When we met on the street, I started to say to my friend, "Happy New Year," but the words stopped halfway between my heart and lips.

I knew something of the problems of that family and of the burdens to be shouldered again in the new year. The familiar greeting would have sounded like mockery.

How I longed for some simple phrase to express the best wish of all for any new year. It would be a sum-

mary of a Bible promise, "And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2:25).

To those who face a year on which the locusts of fear and discouragement seem to have settled, or who look out on acres of hope which have been stripped through circumstances over which they have no control, these words can supply the vital power for the truest kind of happy new year.

Whether by death or discouragement, the locust-eaten years come to personalities of men as they do to fields of wheat or corn. Sometimes the problem has no visible solution, so that the individual hates to face the beginning of the calendar year. It is then that a reminder is needed of the Bible promise that God *will* restore the years.

Meanwhile, hope determines the attitude in which the monotonous, even sadness-filled days are lived out. There may be nothing but routine duties, the washing of dishes, making of beds, sweeping of floors, preparing meals, but if this is done in the hope that a child will recover his health, that a son will find the way to go on to medical school, that a daughter will discover the proper mate—then the home atmosphere may be one of happiness.

Many little duties sometimes seem to hurt the years, the "locusts" made of the conglomeration of details. There is the baking of beans for club suppers, driving to com-

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mittee meetings, preparing for church-school classes. Such details nibble into the time in which the individual had somehow hoped to do great things to fulfill his own dreams.

Yet as the years of restoration come, perspective is often granted to see that these small things in themselves led to large achievements. Personalities have developed into Christian characters because of the time spent in the many little tasks which have devoured one's time. Perhaps a school teacher can watch a boy or girl grown now to adulthood, making a fine contribution to his profession.

Yet there is one most important fact about locusts which is too often overlooked. The dictionary stresses that the locust is "migratory." This means that by its very nature it *does* move on. This meaning adds glory to the Bible promise, and indicates that there was indeed purpose in the selection of this word locust in giving such a wonderful word of assurance.

As the individual learns that the locusts of his life are "migratory," passing on, he also learns to look about him to see on which other life the locusts have now attached themselves. Is it some friend who is experiencing a similar problem? Is it a relative who now faces the loss similar to that which you yourself lived through? Perhaps it is an acquaintance down the block who now faces a temptation similar to yours in some years back.

YEAR OF RESTORATION

As the locusts of life move from one individual to another, there is need to pass along your own hopeful experience.

Tourists of whatever faith who tour the temple grounds in Salt Lake City, Utah, pass before the statue to the sea gull which the Mormon church has erected. They listen as the guide tells the familiar story of how the pioneers in the West saw the complete destruction of their crops impending because of the locusts which descended like a dense cloud from the sky.

All the men, women, and children were called to the fields to try to battle them. Finding themselves incapable of defending the crops in their own strength, they fell to their knees in fervent prayer, and sea gulls appeared which devoured the locusts and spared the crops.

No one who has seen the giant statue to the great bird of the sea erected in the midst of the barren desert country can fail to share something of the excitement of the guide as he tells the story of what this church chooses to consider a modern-day miracle, sent in answer to prayer.

So whenever I see friends whose lives are being devoured by the locusts of doubt, indecision, fear, death, or destruction through bad habit, I long for a miracle in their lives. And sometimes one comes.

But what of the fields already laid waste? What if the year seems to hold no earthly promise? The one

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best-loved is gone because of death, leaving another with a burden of problems and hopes diminished because of a necessary change in dreams.

Thinking of such I sit before my address book, even as you do at the turn of the year. Is there some card of help I can address? Or had I better just say nothing at all? Yet this friend above all others needs some message. To all such people I wish I could find the right note to remind them of the Bible's promise of the years of restoration. Perhaps it would say something like this:

As the bells of the New Year ring, whether Big Ben in London, or the little clock on the mantel, may they usher in a happy year of fulfillment.

But if this is the year when your sorrow remains in your heart, may the year bring you hope as you rest assured in the promise that given time, God will restore to your life the years which "the locust hath eaten."

PRAYER

God, we turn to thee as the New Year begins, asking a special portion of thy blessing, day by day. Each of us has known the work of the locusts, and we all have occasion to be grateful for thy great love, restoring to us a sense of direction in life. Whatever the circumstances of this unknown year ahead, be near to us, giving us

END OF THE ROAD

strength to fight off the locusts in our lives and those of others in our church and community. *Amen.*

33. END OF THE ROAD

(*Easter*)

SCRIPTURE: Rom. 6:17-23

"But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Vs. 22.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

A moment of revelation of truth encountered in travel can change the course of thinking of the one who has the experience. Today's meditation tells of the new meaning of Easter which came to a woman who stood where the roads "run out and stop" on the North American continent.

End of the Road

The neighbor children stood on tiptoe looking toward the top of the outline map which covers one wall

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of our study. A black line marked a trip, swinging all the way north to Circle City, Alaska. There it ended. They said solemnly, "This time, you ran clear out of map."

I will never forget that afternoon when we "ran out of map." It was a sunset hour in late summer. My husband and I had parked our car at the point where all the motoring roads on the North American continent run out and stop. A few miles south of the Arctic Circle, it is the last spot one can reach by continuous connecting highway.

For a long time I had wondered what it would be like where the roads ended. We thought of it as we drove from our home in Southern California, north through Canada, along the Alcan Highway to Fairbanks, Alaska, and then on the final two-hundred-mile stretch to Circle City.

One of my favorite poems should have prepared me for what I would find. For since I first heard them in English class, I have loved Kipling's lines from "Where the Trails Run Out and Stop," in which he counsels that even there, something unadventured remains.

Yet I felt like a discoverer when at last I actually stood where the roadway ends. For there, where the highway stopped, water and sky took over to infinity. At our feet was the swift-rushing Yukon, which boats could traverse to northern seas. Overhead was the arch

ing blue sky, with even now a plane flying ever beyond.

Together my husband and I stood in silence where the roadway ends, listening to the sound of the wind in the trees, the fall of a leaf at our feet as it rustled against the pebbles worn smooth by the river. I picked out three rocks, which my husband promptly christened "Faith, hope and love."

Somehow these rocks tell me of a journey which each of us makes, alone, and over any of a thousand roads that lead to the end of earthborn trails.

On the very day of our return home, when I began to pick up the interrupted pieces of living again, the news was telephoned of a friend who had become ill. She was wasting inevitably away with one of the diseases which still has the doctors baffled.

Within the month we were with the group that went with her from the chapel to the cemetery located in our community on a hillside with a view of beautiful mountains. There are trees in which the singing birds make their home, and sometimes the gardeners complain about the squirrels and baby bunnies.

Waiting there I listened to the pastor intoning the age-old phrase, "dust to dust." And perhaps it was this which caused me to think of the long road we had been traveling while she suffered. Or maybe it was the inquisitive rabbit sitting quite still over on another knoll

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watching these weeping people, and who might well have been a distant cousin of the Arctic snowshoe bunnies.

Whatever the cause, I found myself looking up and seeing the wide sweep of blue sky beyond the hills. It was the exact shade of blue as had been the arching sky where the roadways ended. Even as I listened, I heard the sound of the rushing wind in the trees, and was that a leaf stirring on the gravel walk?

I remembered how much *more* there had been, in the far north, waiting beyond, where the roadway ended, and how much there was beyond the ending of my friend's road. Would not the force which designated the river to take over where the land ceased, also permit the swift rushing years to flow with vitality into eternity? In that moment I was more confident than ever that it was so.

As soon as we were home, the memory sent me into the study to take a good look at my three pebbles. "Faith, hope, and love," my husband had said. They were good words to bring to the end of the road. Fashioned of rock as "permanent" as is anything in this transient world, they spoke to me anew of the firmness of faith, the solidity of hope, the power of love.

These three tangible talismen I had brought back with me from where the roadways ended. These three in-

tangibles I could take with me in my personal journey to the end of my road.

So it is with confidence that I walk the daily path of the inevitable journey and watch my friends, each in his separate pilgrimage. I read with new vision the Easter story with its road of service and sacrificial love, its carrying of crosses to the end.

I glance at the wide black mark on the wall where we "ran out of map," and I know now that this is truly the remark of a child. I need never run out of map!

Parts may remain uncharted or unseen with our present means of recording time and space, but where the earthly roads run out and stop, infinity takes over with limitless sea, sky, stars, and suns of eternity.

PRAYER

Dear God of Easter Morning, help us remember the greatness of the promise of Eternal Life. Even as we so often are involved in the dust of that which is transient help us to lift our eyes above to the vastness of the sky and the sea beyond. May we grasp something of the verities of eternity even as we work in our homes and churches at the humble tasks of earth. *Amen.*

34. PRESENT FOR MOTHER

(*Mother's Day*)

SCRIPTURE: Mark 3:31-35

"For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother." (Vs. 35.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

An interesting question is posed in today's meditation. What would each of us choose as a present for mother if we were about to set sail on a trip around the world and had many countries in which to make that choice?

Present for Mother

"Mother, what do you want me to bring you from our trip around the world?"

"Yourselves," said my mother, at the foot of the gang plank, as she gave my husband an affectionate pat on the shoulder.

As the ship left port, I found myself remembering the days when as a little girl I had swung back and forth on the porch swing, wishing I could sail away on a cloud, or follow the wind beyond the honeysuckle vine.

Such early dreaming had always included visions of the piles of gold and precious stones—rubies, pearls, diamonds—I would scoop up into my arms in foreign

countries as so much sand from our playhouse sand-pile. All these jewels I would carry home to my mother.

Now I knew that whatever I bought for mother would be paid for in hard-earned coin of this realm, translated into whatever foreign coinage was needed when I saw the best gift for her. This might mean rupees, shillings, francs, piasters, liras.

Where indeed would I find the best present for mother? Would it be a sandalwood fan from Japan with which she could keep the warm air away as she sat in church on Sunday morning? Should I find some silver buttons in India to add to a hobby collection? Finally we found this gift in a perfume factory, and this is the story of why we bought it.

Leaving the boat for a guided bus tour inland, we had been passing through the flower-growing fields along the seacoast of France, where pink and red roses are grown on terraces in innumerable tiers. The flowers are allowed to come to full blossom and never picked in buds for the opened petals are placed on baskets in big truckloads to go to market to be made up into perfume.

We had followed one of these trucks to the factory where a chic little French maid had explained how perfume was manufactured. There were several processes, but the one which interested us most involved the use of a meat fat, such as it left in the bottom of the pan when mother had prepared roast for Sunday dinner.

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Always there had been extra fat to be drained off so the gravy wouldn't be too greasy to digest. Now I learned that trays of heavy fat were carried into certain sections of the field of growing flowers. There each morning the crew of girls who picked posies would find new blossoms to place on top the fat, exposing the petals from above to the rays of the sun.

When the petals were wilted at night, they were removed from the trays, and next morning fresh, new petals were added to the waiting fat. Each day the fat would absorb some of the fragrance of whatever flower was placed closest to it: violet, lily of the valley, rose, carnation.

After the saturation point was reached through countless applications of the thousands of petals, the trays of fat would be subjected to a refining process. The residue which appeared to be a waxy-like substance would be placed in perfume containers of white plastic or china. Each would have on the lid a colored imprint of the flower which had scented the fat beneath the sun in the fields during the heat of the day.

Such a wonderful fragrance came from each opened container. Even a tiny touch of the wax and the wearer felt an uplift of spirit for inside the box was the essence of the flowers and the sun with the common substance of the fat transformed into perfume through close proximity day after day with the elements of loveliness.

So now I knew I had the gift to take home to mother, for I remembered how with patience she had placed uncounted acts of loving understanding above the everyday chores of cooking, cleaning, and patching, the solid, drab substance of keeping house. She had found ways to transform duty into beauty: sitting up late at night to surprise a daughter with a new dress for the doll; the baking of the extra loaf for her children to take to the sick family down the street and learn of another's needs.

All of this had been done with a song on her lips, even as the echo came now from the girls arranging the flowers on the trays in the perfume fields. My hands closed eagerly over the white container with its perfumed wax bearing an embossed, purple violet on the cover. There could be no doubt which fragrance to choose for mother who still tended the purple patch by the back step from which she had always made a violet nosegay for our trays when we were sick.

So it was a tiny package I added to the collection of items in the suitcase to carry home for mother, and I wondered how to tell her why I had happened to buy this for her. The perfume itself came to my rescue in the telling, for when I reached home all the items in the suitcase were redolent of its fragrance. So it is with mothers and their acts of loving kindness, the perfume escapes and permeates all who are privileged to come into contact.

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PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, we are so grateful that thou dost give to us the great gift of mothers to make clear the extent of thy divine love for each of us. May we remember that the best present we can ever give back to our mothers is a heart filled with love for others, a motherly concern for the causes of the cross in behalf of thy children everywhere. Amen.

35. HAWAIIAN LEIS OF REMEMBRANCE

(Memorial Day)

SCRIPTURE: Mal. 3:16-18

"And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." (Vs. 16.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

One of the American holidays is becoming a part of the heritage of other countries as our young men and

HAWAIIAN LEIS OF REMEMBRANCE

women in uniform go to the far corners of the world. Memorial Day honoring their service even to the offering of their lives in behalf of freedom is a particular holiday of rich significance to Americans wherever stationed. Today we hear the story of how the fiftieth state, Hawaii, is observing Memorial Day by the making of colorful leis for the honored war dead.

Hawaiian Leis of Remembrance

On Memorial Day when traditionally American families go to the graves of their loved ones with flowers from the family garden or florist, one special cemetery is covered with leis of orchids, hibiscus, flowering shrubs. This is the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Punch Bowl Crater near Honolulu.

Here lie buried thousands of the honored war dead including the beloved correspondent Ernie Pyle. His grave and those of enlisted men and officers of all rank, color, and creed are specially honored on Memorial Day.

School children from the separate islands of the newest American state prepare leis for the grave of each individual whose last resting place is this sacred spot of sand, sea, and sky.

Leis are flown to Honolulu and at dusk on the evening before Memorial Day crews of Boy Scouts begin the reverent pilgrimage to the "Punch Bowl." There on the

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slopes of this extinct volcanic crater, a lei is placed on each headstone. The pastel colorings of the fragrant flowers contrast with the soft green of the healing grass above the good brown earth.

Overhead is the arching sky of blue with a white cloud seeming a ship of the sky. In the stillness on this hillside the traveler imagines he can hear the pounding of the surf in the distance below, but nearer is the call of a bird sweeping low to investigate the garland of pink sweet peas and blue flowering tree.

At eleven o'clock on Memorial morning special exercises are held to which tourists are welcome. The sound of booming cannons in salute startles one with its grim reminder of wartime fury which claimed the lives of many of the men.

This salute is answered by the soft sweep of the wind as it sifts across the sacred soil. For a slight moment it seems to pause at the grave of Ernie Pyle. A flower petal moves with the breeze as if to remind the watcher of the rhythmic writing of Pyle as he recalled the wind of his prairie youth.

Now the winds of eternity guard these graves of men in military uniform. As their hearts have always remained in the homeland, now their bodies also lie within the boundaries of these United States of America. The state of Hawaii observes Memorial Day by honoring them.

MOST BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF PAPER

PRAYER

Dear God, each of us has his own Memorial Day of special remembrance involving loved ones who have gone on ahead. On this special day when our nation pauses to remember its war dead, we would join our hearts together in a special prayer for peace. Grant that the hope of thy Son for peace among men of good will may become a reality and that thy world of beauty may be enjoyed by all men everywhere in peaceful service and happy respect for one another. *Amen.*

36. MOST BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF PAPER (*July Fourth*)

SCRIPTURE: Lev. 25:10-13

"And proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." (Vs. 10.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

As we celebrate the birthday of America, it is well to be reminded of the words of liberty as inscribed on the

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liberty bell, and which constituted our scripture verse. Our meditation comes in the form of a tribute to America as spoken to travelers by an Indian on the streets of Bombay, India.

Most Beautiful Piece of Paper

Whenever July Fourth orators speak about the greatness of America, I remember the best patriotic tribute to this country I ever heard. It came from the lips of a dark-skinned man on the streets of Bombay, India.

In brilliant moonlight my husband and I waited for a cab outside the ship docks. A young-appearing Indian man approached and asked, "Americans?"

We nodded affirmatively and he said, "How I would love to go to America."

Glancing at his earnest face we said, "Well you seem to be young and in good health. You certainly speak excellent English. Why don't you go to America and fulfill your wish?"

He smiled politely and said, "But, madam, I do not have in my purse what you have in yours."

Instantly I was on the defensive, thinking he had misjudged me as a "rich American." For I recalled the years of savings into a travel fund which had gone into the purchase of our tickets to take us round the world by boat.

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So I said with some shortness, "It may not take as much money as you seem to think to travel, at least not by freighter. Couldn't you earn your way across the waters, if you really want to go to America?"

A sadness covered his eyes, and a hurt, bewildered tone came into his voice. He bowed stiffly and said, "I am sorry if you thought I was talking about money when I referred to what you have in your purse."

Now it was my turn to feel embarrassed, for I had of course thought he meant coin of the realm. Wherever we had gone, we had been besieged by people who wanted the Americans to buy their goods, or who asked for coins.

Hadn't we been such generous givers as a nation through our taxes that we had come to think all foreign nations wanted was our economic help? Was it possible that in the attendant confusion our own hearts had become so materialistic that we immediately thought of money when possessions were mentioned?

The man on the street in Bombay faced us directly. Wearily he lifted one hand to wipe the perspiration from his eyes. With a shrug of his shoulders he held out both hands hopelessly, as if despairing of convincing me of what he had in his mind.

"Believe me, when I speak of what you have in your purse, I do not refer to money."

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He lifted his right hand and pointed the index finger at me while he repeated, "Yet you do have in your purse the most beautiful piece of paper in the world today."

He turned away, but we called him back and he began earnestly: "Is it possible that I should have to tell you who can travel to almost any part of the globe how wonderful is the piece of paper which permits you to do so? I mean of course your American passport."

Instinctively we clutched at our bag, remembering the green folder bearing the identifying picture.

"Your American passport opens so many doors which are closed to me," said the young Indian.

"Is there no way for you to get a visa to come to our country and become a citizen?" I asked him.

He shook his head in the negative. "You should see the long line of people in this part of the world who are ahead of me," he said. "I am older than I look and not in my lifetime will it be possible. As for my sons I do not know."

Our taxi had arrived at the curb now, and with a flourish the Indian opened the door for us and said, "Remember, it is the most beautiful piece of paper."

Remember, we did, as our boat came up through the Suez Canal where sentries on camels lined the sandy beaches, as we passed into the cool waters of the Mediterranean, enjoying springtime along the coast of France

MOST BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF PAPER

with the red poppies which grow in Flander's Field where sleep our honored dead.

Standing in the Bible Room of the British Museum in the center of London and looking at the copies of special translations of the Bible with which men had paid with their lives, we remembered again.

When we saw the original documents promising men civil liberties, we thought also of our own American constitution and how the current passport represents all these documents.

It ties up in one neat, little bundle the religious and civil rights of Americans, granting them independence to travel in accordance with the laws of this and other lands, learning about neighbors and friends in other parts of the world.

Each year when the birthday of our country approaches, we take a good straight look at the well-thumbed passport in our files, and we remember with gratitude the young man on the streets of Bombay who unknowingly delivered for us our best July Fourth oration.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, even as we cherish our liberties in America, help us remember the greatest liberty of all, that which is found in belief in thy Son Jesus. May we stand liberated in the faith which makes us free and

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prize above all else the gift of Salvation which is our passport to eternal life. *Amen.*

37. PIE FOR THE FAIR

(*Labor Day*)

SCRIPTURE: Prov. 31:10-31

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. (Vs. 25.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Much interest centers in the forty-ninth state, Alaska. Today we learn the story of how the baking of a pie in a crude kitchen had much to do with the building of its fine citizens. Perhaps we will find encouragement for the everyday tasks in our own kitchens as we read the story of Alaskan moose mincemeat pie.

Pie for the Fair

When Alaska became the forty-ninth state, I went into our kitchen and baked a mincemeat pie to cele-

brate. This was the closest I could come to duplicating one of the happiest experiences my husband and I enjoyed the year we drove the Alcan Highway.

One thing my pie lacked was moose meat, which is standard equipment in Alaskan mince pie. The best and largest piece I ever ate was in the Matanuska Valley beyond Anchorage. The white-haired woman who baked it had gone to Alaska during the "depression."

As one of those who "stuck it out," she now lives in a comfortable home in Palmer, situated in an enchanted valley of rare beauty. There the vegetables which feed much of Alaska are grown in rich, fertile soil. Cattle graze against the lush green foliage of the short summer.

When I asked for the secret of her delicious pie, the woman smiled and confessed, "It was just another way to use up moose meat. It was about all some of us had that first winter here."

She told me they had shivered in tents, their children huddled by wood-burning stoves while the men tried to finish houses. Sometimes the children were sick, and always they were restless in the cramped quarters. So she decided to bake some little pies such as her mother made when she was small.

She went into the kitchen of the canvas lodging and cut up some moose meat and cooked it with spices and apples. The fragrance of the pie browning in the oven

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helped to erase the homesickness and bitterness which caused some of the settlers to return.

This was typical of the pie which was taken to the first community meeting in the little valley and which now goes to church suppers. It is served to travelers at the annual Matanuska Valley Fair over Labor Day week ends.

The day we were there we followed a good, paved road out from Anchorage, the road winding along a stream in which fish could sometimes be seen in the clear waters. At the fairgrounds we found tables set for a lavish turkey dinner, and we heard laughter as one old friend discovered another, for the event takes on the nature of a reunion.

Not all the pioneers stayed in that area. Many have branched out into other parts of what became our largest state. Yet they all try to return "home" for fellowship and another piece of moose mincemeat pie. It reminds one of the courage and perseverance of those who helped build the forty-ninth state.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the example of the pioneer women who by the performing of tasks within their own kitchens have helped to keep the dreams of their families nourished as well as their physical

THE LITTLEST SPOOK

bodies. Help us remember that what we do each day has a significance beyond the pots and pans and can encourage boys and girls who will be worthy citizens of great states. Above all may we not forget to pray for the proper nourishment of the souls of those who face hardships and depression that they may have courage to meet difficult situations and triumph. *Amen.*

38. THE LITTLEST SPOOK (*Halloween*)

SCRIPTURE: Isa. 35:3-7

"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not." (Vs. 4.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Many countries have their special customs concerning the night when the ghosts are supposed to walk. In America the custom has developed concerning "Trick or Treat," although sometimes groups of children ask for

gifts of thread and needles to send to needy groups in other areas. Today's meditation tells what happened in one family when there was a large knock at the door, but the visitor proved to be the littlest spook.

The Littlest Spook

When we heard the loud banging at the front door, on Halloween Night, my husband and I switched on the porch light. We expected to see the biggest ghost of the evening.

Instead there stood the tiniest spooks we had ever imagined. Not for them were costumes made of sheets. They were so small their pillowcase costumes dragged along the porch. Plainly someone else had made the noise for them and disappeared into the dark.

The briefest spook of the three summoned her voice finally and said, "We're just little spooks. Please don't be mad. I'm the littlest spook of all."

As we invited the three tiny spooks in for their traditional treat, they seemed almost afraid to come into the well-lighted living room. By now the littlest spook had a tear running down her white mask where it made a blurred, wet spot against the rouge-painted cheeks. She could not stop her tears which soon turned into sobs. No, she did not want any candy. Apples would not console her. She did not want to pet our purring Smokey.

THE LITTLEST SPOOK

Finally we remembered a book from the library shelf. Looking at its pictures, she forgot her spooky mission, stopped her crying, and soon left our doorway.

We resumed our reading, taking time out to welcome a pirate, a young cowboy, and a beautiful blonde "girl," looking suspiciously like our neighbor boy, but the Halloween highlight surely had been the littlest spook.

She has stayed with us through the year to be of daily comfort as we listen to radio and television, read the newspapers, and talk with friends about the state of the world.

For any year with the atom and hydrogen bomb has its Halloween aspects, and we are highly comforted to recall that despite the loud noises on the porch, we once found there, just the littlest spook of all, who was more scared than we were.

Too, we have recalled that it was a book which finally made our spook walk out the door. Therefore when loud noises of international uncertainty rattle the windowpanes, we go into the den and take down a book to read.

It is a book which shows how people have faced their problems with courage, found faith instead of fear, the book of our pioneer parents who built America as a land of the free. Large or small, the ghosts of fear retreat when faced with the precious promises found in the Bible.

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PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, so often we have had such large fears and been afraid even to turn these fears over to thee. Take away from us all such attitudes of fright and secrecy. Help us to march boldly to thy throne of grace, offering any of the ghostly memories which keep us from serving at the best capacity. May we face ourselves in the light of thy compassionate love and watch the dark shadows of sin disappear that we may serve thee better in days to come. *Amen.*

39. ATTENDING CHURCH WITH GRATITUDE (*Thanksgiving*)

SCRIPTURE: I Tim. 2:1-6

"And giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."
(Vss. 1-2.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

Thanksgiving Day is observed in many communities by special services of worship inside the church. These lovely seasonal hours highlight the fact that the family each week has the opportunity to attend the church of its choice. Today we hear the story of how a traveler learned of the memorable church attendance of the Royal Family of England in a special service of Thanksgiving.

Attending Church with Gratitude

Visitors to Europe, or England and Scotland, find that churches are placed high on the list of beautiful spots which guides like to show to travelers.

Many look forward to attending the lovely services when away from home. High on the list of cherished places for Sunday worship may be Westminster Abbey in the heart of London near Big Ben and the River Thames.

The heart may find meaning and significance for life beneath the great dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. There the visitor hears the story of how a workman found the word "Resurgam" on the marking stone when rebuilding the cathedral after the great fire. Anew he realizes the possibilities for human growth through love.

Fortunate indeed is the traveler who can make the

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trip from London out through the rolling, green hillside down to Canterbury Cathedral.

Unforgettable is the picture of the spires of that beautiful cathedral silhouetted against the blue sky, the gardens of canterbury bells of pink and blue with bushes growing almost shoulder high.

Services are held there frequently during week days as well as Sundays. There may be a service in progress with the rector reading the story of the "alabaster box of precious ointment." A boys' choir may be singing the chant of "O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go," even as sung in our hometown churches.

Inside the entrance now is a large oil painting which commemorates "The Thanksgiving Service of July 11, 1946, for the deliverance of this cathedral during the Great War, attended by Their Majesties, The King and Queen and Her Royal Highness, Princess Elizabeth."

The tourist pauses with high regard before the portraits of the royal family, remembering the example they set by coming down from London to attend this Thanksgiving service at Canterbury Cathedral.

Seeing this picture and hearing the story of why it now has such a prominent spot in the centuries-old cathedral, the visitor feels a new sense of gratitude that he has his own church in which to worship in freedom.

One way to keep that heritage intact is to see that the family gets to the church of its choice each Sunday

ATTENDING CHURCH WITH GRATITUDE

morning to worship there with others of the community, thanking God for blessings for which others have given their lives.

The coming of Thanksgiving presents a new opportunity for expressing gratitude for the church and what it means in modern life. Thanksgiving is a time also for giving thanks for the rich joy of friendships made at home and in travel. Such appreciation is best expressed through a renewed consecration to the ideals of the Cross which is held in honored reverence in all of the beautiful churches around the world.

PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, forgive us because we accept so lightly the great gift of religious freedom, the ability to attend our hometown church. Give us a new vision of the great blessing of our spiritual heritage. Then may we have a corresponding sense of our responsibility to preserve this for future generations by seeing that our children learn the habit of supporting the local church and its missionary activities. *Amen.*

40. THE CAROL THAT TRAVELS

(*Christmas*)

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-20

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Vs. 14.)

LEADER'S INTRODUCTION

One of the best-loved carols of the Christian Church is the subject of today's meditation. A visitor in a foreign country heard the carol in a way that taught her the true meaning of Christmas Peace.

The Carol that Travels

Whenever radio and television sets repeat that familiar carol, "Silent Night," the melody recalls for me one of the hottest summer days ever spent in travel.

In Rome not far from the Coliseum and with the temperature so hot that even the guides fanned themselves, an organ played this carol usually associated with snow and Christmas trees.

Perhaps to let us rest from tramping over the ruins where early Christian martyrs met their deaths, the guide led us into the comparative coolness of a tall cathedral. It took a while for our sun-smarting eyes to

THE CAROL THAT TRAVELS

determine that the white in the choir loft did not come from the robes of church singers.

Instead the white uniforms were the summer garb of men of the United States Navy. Our guide spoke to their guide and whispered that these men were returning from a long tour of duty in the Far East. The organist was playing for the sailors an all-request program of their favorite tunes.

Looking at the men nearest the organ, we wondered who had taken the initiative in asking for this carol. Was it the tall blonde sitting next to the dark-skinned boy? Or that youngster who might have come from a farm, next to the wiry boy who looked as though he were adept at dodging city taxis?

All were listening intently as the strains of this carol of peace echoed from the powerful organ. The carol seemed to transport the men from their seats in the choir loft to those in the hometown church with a date with the girl back home on Christmas night.

Forgotten now for all within the cathedral walls were the waiting ruins of the battlefields of the Caesars of conquest, deserted under the hot sun. Before us were men trained in the use of the most modern methods of warfare, but the organ spoke eloquently their longing for peace.

As we left the church and sight-seeing busses of military men and tourists rolled past European cemeteries

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bright with blood-red poppies, I remembered how the organist had pulled out all the stops when he came to the crescendo of peace.

Now as I hear the strains of "Silent Night" echoing into our home as the holidays near, I remember the power of this song to help keep alive the hope of peace even in those who must be trained to fight. And I think of the remote corners of the world into which this carol has traveled in mankind's unceasing search for peace.

PRAYER

Prince of Peace, come into our hearts today and make us true soldiers of the Cross. Let us march forward with a song of peace in our hearts, but may we always be militant fighters for the cause of righteousness. *Amen.*

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